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W. Jones



James



Lonsdale



A ROMANCE OF
THE PASSIONS,
IN THREE VOLUMES.



The author is indebted to the Rev. Mr. [illegible] for the use of the original manuscript of the [illegible] and the [illegible] of the [illegible].

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A BOOK

OF

THE PASSIONS.

BY
G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

ILLUSTRATED WITH SIXTEEN SPLENDID ENGRAVINGS,

From Drawings

BY THE MOST EMINENT ARTISTS,

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF MR. CHARLES HEATH.

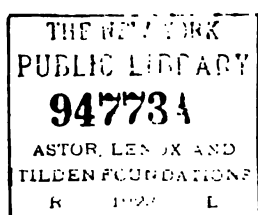
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LIST OF PLATES.

PLATE	PAGE
I. LEONORA (Frontispiece).	
II. VIGNETTE TITLE.	
III....." I told her all—all—everything ; and, for her answer, she cast her arms around my neck and wept"	71
IV. LAURA	73
V....." It was one bright evening in the midst of May, and my husband sat beside me in the portico, with his arm cast lightly round me ; while my father, at a little distance, sat reading some tale of classic lore"	99
VI. LUCY GRANGE	111
VII....." You forget, my good friend," replied Dillon, calmly, "that there are bars upon the windows in your present abode"	142
VIII. BLANCHE OF NAVARRE	155
IX....." Blanche would instantly have darted back again out of the gallery : but Isabel of Valois held her firmly by the arm, without uttering a word, and even advanced still further towards the front"	183
X...." Round an old fountain, crowned with rude stonework, the waters of which had been drunk by many a passing generation, stood a number of horses and armed men"	199
XI....." The moment the door of the dungeon had closed behind her she paused, and stood as if rooted to the ground, with her eyes bent down upon the damp grey pavement, and the deep lines of intense thought knitting her fair, splendid brow"	212
XII. EMILY	228
XIII....." I ordered the windows to be closed after dinner, and took down my pistols to perform the last act"	249
XIV. MARIA DE ARQUAS	255
XV....." I took her at once in my arms, and lifted her out"	268
XVI....." She, also, it appeared, remembered me ; and I stopped my horse to speak to her"	277

REMORSE.

WINTER is upon my brow, and in my heart—the dark, the sombre, the hopeless winter of age ; with no bright spring to gladden the straining eye of expectation, no warmer season, no flowery hours, beyond !

Winter is upon my brow, and in my heart—the stern, cold, sorrowful winter of age : but not the winter as it comes to some, after a long and sunshiny life of joy treading upon joy, and of one pleasant cup drained after another till the sated and the weary spirit sees the hour of rest approaching with the calm glad hope of peaceful slumber, destined to end in another day as bright, as full of glory and enjoyment !

Time, that has blanched the hair and dimmed the eye ; Time, that has bent the powerful frame and relaxed the vigorous sinew ; Time, that obliterates so many things from the tablets of memory—is it Time that has blotted out the joys, the hopes, the feelings, that were once bright and clear in this stony heart ? is it Time that has rendered the past a fearful chaos of dark remembrances ; the future, a vision of terrible apprehensions ?

Alas, no ! Time has broken down the strength of limb, blanched the jetty locks that curled around my brow in youth, dimmed the bright eye that gazed unshielded on the sun, made the hand tremble and the head to bow. All the slow ruin that he works on man, Time has wrought on me ;

but he has refused me all those blessings which soften and alleviate the destructive power of his calm, deliberate hand. He has taken away no dark memory of the past, he has assuaged no pang, he has relieved me of no burden, he has removed no regret, he has given no hope, he has withheld even the consolation of decay, he has denied me death itself. Linger on, beyond the allotted space of man, I seem still approaching to an end that is not reached ; and, as if the agonies of the heart had hardened into marble the external frame, the ruin of these fleshly limbs marches with the same slow progress which marks the decay of the dark and gloomy arches amidst which I dwell.

I can remember yonder wide and spreading elm, which shadows the fountain before the door of the abbey, a sapling tree, scarce higher than my staff. I can remember yon iron chain, now worn and corroded with the rust, which attaches the cup to the stonework round the spring, new and polished from the hands of the workman. But Time, which has spread out the tree in its majesty, has left me withering even more slowly than it has sprung up ; and, though the corroding rust upon my heart has entered more deeply into my soul than that upon the chain has gnawed into its links, I fear—alas ! I fear—that long after the iron has snapped asunder, and the cup has fallen to the ground, the weary chain of hours will still exist for me, and this worthless frame will still be linked to the earth it hates.

Listen, and you shall hear ; for the tale may be instructive to others ! Nor is it painful to myself to tell : for every act—for every thought, of that dark, melancholy history, is as clearly before my eyes, at each moment of existence, as it was in the time of its performance. The past—to me, the dreadful past !—is one eternal present ; and the Promethean vulture of remorse preys on me now, and for ever.

I remember myself once a sunny child ; and the gay, light-hearted maidens of my mother playing with the glossy locks of my dark-brown hair, and vowing that I was the prettiest boy that ever had been seen ; crying, " Well-a-day ! what a pity he is not the eldest son ! "

I remember myself in those spring moments of early life, sitting by my sweet mother's knee, and gazing up into her soft hazel eyes, and reading there a whole volume of deep maternal love. I remember, too, having seen those eyes turned from me to my elder brother, and to have marked a sigh break even from amidst the smiles that, in those days, hung upon her lips.

I remember myself, in that age of eagerness and super-abundant life, running by the side of my father's battle-horse, when he rode forth to join the armies of the Emperor, about to carry warfare into France ; and I remember very well his bending down and blessing me, for a bold, brave boy.

I remember myself, in those hours of emulation, when the active spirit within struggles for objects beyond that which the feebleness of the young body can attain,—I remember myself striving with my brother, some three years older than myself, in all his sports and pastimes ; and proudly feeling, that I was not so far behind him as the difference of our years might justify. Yet was the rivalry without jealousy. I loved him well ; for my heart was framed to love things around it—to love too well, too deeply, too wildly, all and everything with which it could make companionship ; all and everything which it could enjoy and esteem. The singing of the summer birds, in those young days had a charm of a peculiar kind for me : it was not alone that it pleased my ear ; but the deep melody of nature's voice found its way in thrilling accents to my heart, and won my love for those that poured it forth. I felt mournful when the yearly time of

song was over ; and I should no sooner have thought of sending a bolt from my cross-bow at one of the sweet choristers of spring, than I should of turning my tiny dagger against my own young breast. The flowers, too,—I loved the flowers : I watched them opening, I watched them in their bloom ; I would stoop down and gaze into their bosoms of purple and gold, as if I could read there the bright secret of their mysterious life, and trace the fanciful link of association between their being and my own. When they withered, and when they died, too—especially if the blight fell upon some favourite, which I had long nourished and daily gazed upon—I could have wept : I should have wept, perhaps, if shame had not closed the fountain of my tears.

Woe be to those that blast such feelings ! and a curse upon that fate which destroys them ! For, just as they are intense and fine, so are they frail and destructible ; just as they are bright and deep-rooted, so do they leave behind a darkness and a chasm. What can I feel now ? what can I love now ? what have I felt and loved for more than sixty years ?— * * * * *

I was speaking of my brother. I loved him well—oh, how well !—for there were moments when he was kindly towards me, and when flashes of affection broke forth towards his little Karl, which woke up all the warm feelings of my heart. It is true, that even from a boy he was of a wayward and a gibing nature ; fond to mock and to irritate ; careless of inflicting wounds, or causing pain ; haughty and proud, but brave and generous ; and often, when he had struck a blow which could never be forgiven, the better spirit would rise up, and he would strive to wash it out by a torrent of noble actions. I loved him well ; and I can see him now, with his rougher features, and his broader form, standing on my father's other hand, whilst I played with the dagger in his

belt—the dagger, covering its sharp and deadly blade in the soft, seemly sheath of velvet and of gold. I have thought, full often, that that dagger, with its splendid mountings, was but too like myself—bright, beautiful, and innocent, till moved by some strong, commanding power; and then, what a deadly instrument in the hand of Fate! I remember him well, standing, as I have said, by my father's side, and pleading for some permission, or some indulgence, to be granted to his younger brother; and I have seen and known while he so pleaded, that he sought to make compensation for some pain which he had inflicted—for some harsh jest, or unkind action. But I must not pause longer on individual remembrances, nor call up detached pictures from the past; but rather proceed with my tale as a connected history, shewing the dark current of events in one continuous stream.

We grew up thus from infancy to boyhood, instructed, under able masters, in all that befitted our age to learn. In the ordinary studies of the day, I believe I was more quick than he was; at least, I made greater progress: but in those things he strove not to rival me; and, perhaps, it was want of emulation on his part which gave me any degree of advantage. He contemned that learning in which the brain alone is occupied; he looked upon it as the portion of the monk, the schoolman, or the lawyer—beings for whom he entertained a sovereign contempt; and he left it to me, as one destined, by that fate which had made me a younger brother, to take the gown at a future period, and to inherit the rich benefices which our family could command. In these things, then, he strove not with me; the subtleties of scholastic logic, he called, most truly, a perversion of human reason. The beauties of ancient literature, the immortal poesy of Greece and Rome, he felt not, he loved not, he sought not to com-

prehend. For the art of the statesman he had, indeed, some reverence ; and, in some degree, loved those clear and definite sciences which exercise the mind, while they leave imagination to sleep undisturbed.

The imagination was my portion, and whatever was tinged with it had beauty in my eyes. The lore of ancient Greece and Rome, the tale of minstrel or troubadour, the wild lay of the peasants in our native woods, the strange legends and superstitions of river, and forest, and stream,—all had their charms for me. Eloquence, too, divine eloquence ! that gift which comes nearer than aught else on earth to inspiration—oh, how my very spirit bent and trembled to its power ! how I have been rapt and carried away by the orations of the mighty dead ! how often, in poring over the page breathing with the eternal fire of their magic words, have I not forgotten my age, my country, my habits, and felt all the feelings, thought all the thoughts, and been shaken with all the passions, that shook the auditory in the Forum or the Areopagus !

But these were not all our studies. The sons of a proud and warlike race, of a high noble, in a land where hostilities existed as often between the princes of the confederation as between that confederation and its external enemies, it was my father's will that we should be taught all that we could learn of military exercises, all that could be taught, in short, in that age, of the science of war. Nor was it to my brother alone that he afforded such instruction ; to me, also—to me, though destined to the church, he gave an education the most fitted to make such a profession unpalatable to me. It is true, indeed, that the clergy, especially of our land, were often called upon to draw the sword, and defend with the strong hand those rights which neither eloquence nor justice could always protect. But still, a natural distaste to the

destiny which others allotted to me, was sadly increased by the instructions which my father gave in all those sports and exercises so pleasant, so refreshing to the elastic limbs of youth and health. To wield the sword ; to charge the lance ; to curb the strength—the wild and fiery strength—of the unbroken war-horse ; to pitch the heavy bar ; to hurl the massy disc ; to leap, to wrestle, and to swim—relieved the heaviness of other studies, and gave to my young frame that power and activity which fitted it for the camp far more than for the cloister.

It was here, too, that came my real competition with my brother. Often he would seem to lie by in idleness, till he was startled from his slothful mood by my near approach in those very exercises on which he prided himself ; and then he would take a sudden start forward in the race, leave me far behind, and scoff at me with triumphant scorn for my disappointed hopes and baffled efforts. It became painful to me—it became terrible ! The eager rivalry, the frequent expectation and disappointment, would have been enough, without the jest, and the gibe, and the mockery ; but when those were superadded, it would drive me for a time into fits of passion, which only added to the scorn with which he treated me. Thus passed the hours till I had reached my fourteenth year ; thus grew up feelings, in our mutual hearts, which, had fate placed the barrier between us that at one time seemed inevitable, might but have been remembered in after years as the offspring of childish quarrels and idle jealousy. As it was, they were destined to go on like some mountain stream, which, gay and brawling in the summer sunshine, frets and foams in sparkling activity against every obstacle that it meets, but does harm to nothing ; till, when the rain falls on the summits above, it is joined on its course by a thousand accessory streams, grows dark and furious,

powerful and overwhelming, and rushes down, a torrent, over the land below, sweeping away peace, and happiness, and prosperity, in its angry course.

At the ages of fifteen and of eighteen, the fate of my brother and myself was to be determined, as far as the choice of our future paths through life was destined to affect it.—Choice, did I say? there was no choice; it was determined by others. At the age of eighteen, he gladly prepared to accompany his father to the tented field, to know all the keen and exciting pleasures that suited his age, his character, and his habits; while I, then but fifteen, was destined to be sent from my paternal roof, to pursue, in the cloisters of Oberzell, those studies which were requisite for holding a high station in the church. While he was to go forth, mingling amongst the bright, and the gay, and the happy, contending for glory in the fields of fame—fields, whose very air is joy and satisfaction—I was destined to bury my bright youth in the dull shadows of a convent, never to come forth, but at brief intervals, till I was shackled with irrevocable vows, bound to a profession for which I was unfitted, cut off from the scenes and the pursuits that I loved, chained like a slave to a heavy oar, which I was to ply through life with equal unwillingness and pain.

While yet between me and that consummation of my fate lay a glad space of intervening hours, I was able, with the blessed power of youthful imagination, to cast away from me the thought of my coming doom, and to enjoy the present, with but few thoughts of the painful future. But, during the six months previous to my retirement to Oberzell, I was like the navigator, mentioned in some wild legend I have read, who, sailing on a calm and summer sea, found suddenly the wind drop away, but his vessel drawn by some unknown power towards an immense black rock, seen faintly rising

above the far edge of the distant waters. At first it seemed all fair to him (so ran the tale), and he looked about, and smiled to see the soft motion with which his bark bore on across that powerful sea. Then came curiosity as to what was that mighty mass, that every day grew larger and larger to his approaching eyes ; then came awe and apprehension, as its frowning features became more distinct, and he found that by no art could he turn the vessel from its onward course ; then came the agony of terror and despair, as nearer and more near, swifter and more swift, he was hurled forward to the black and gloomy crags, against the base of which he saw the waves that bore him rushing with unceasing violence ; and then, raising his hands to heaven, he called for aid in the hour of agony, but called in vain.

Such was the passing of those six months to me. At first, I would not think of the fate that had been announced to me ; I hoped that something might turn it aside ; I fancied that something might delay it, or render it more bearable. But, as time went on, and day by day brought it nearer, fancy refused to aid me—hope deserted me ; every hour, every moment, added to the pangs which I felt. I brooded over my condition ; I pictured to myself all that was gloomy, all that was sad, in the state to which I was doomed ; I contrasted my own lot with my brother's ; and imagination, while it shadowed over the prospect for me with clouds and darkness interminable, shewed me his future life, all smiles and sunshine, all brightness, activity, and joy. Still the hours hurried me rapidly on : I saw the preparations for my departure made ; I saw the dark robes—sombre images of the garniture of my future years—prepared with busy hands ; I saw my mother weep as she gazed upon them ; and, looking forth from the window of my chamber, I beheld, in the court-yard, the proud and prancing

chargers which were to bear my brother to the field ; his gay pages in glittering array, and his bright and costly panoply made ready, with all that could give splendour and brilliancy to his outset in the bright career that lay before his steps. Oh, how my heart burned, as I compared the two with each other ! Oh, how I pondered, in dark despair, over the bitter portion that was assigned to me ! I had never yet thought of avoiding it : I had known too well all those harsh arrangements, which admit no modification, in the families of the high nobility of our native land.

But the mind of man is full of strange contradictions ; and despair itself will generate the wildest hopes. It was in the moment of the darkest and most gloomy conviction of being destined to a life of misery, that first rose the expectation of being able to change my fate—of being able to move my father, by prayers and entreaties, to suffer me to choose a profession better suited to my nature, and to serve in the field, even under that brother whose chance of primogeniture kept me from fortune and the light. It was during the night that such thoughts came across me, as, lying on my restless bed, I pondered over all the dark and frowning features of the future ; and with the first dawn of the morning I was up, and watching for my father's coming forth, to prefer my suit with all the energy and wildness of despair.

It was not long ere I had the opportunity I sought for. I represented to him all my horror of the profession to which he destined him ; I shewed him it was contrary to my habits, to my wishes, to my feelings, to my nature, to my character. He heard me calmly ; and, casting myself on my knees before him, I besought him to give me any other fate but that : to let me serve in the army, under himself and under my brother ; to let me win distinction, and found for myself a new race, as many a younger son

had done. I asked no share of the wealth or the lands which were destined for the elder child ; I asked but a battle-horse and a good sword, and my father's name to befriend me ; and, as he laid his hand upon my head, and suffered his fingers to play, with a smile, amongst the bright curls of my hair, I fondly fancied that he felt my petition to be reasonable, and was about to grant it.

He spoke, and all my hopes vanished into air. His son, he said, must never act the part of a poor adventurer : he approved not, either, of younger brothers rivalling their elders in the profession of arms. Such things often ended ill, he said. Neither could he consent to all the rich benefices in our family, which would make me wealthy and powerful, being cast away, and lost to his house for ever. As to my dislike to the profession of the church, that was but a boyish whim, he told me ; all professions had their conveniences and inconveniences, and, of all that he knew, the church had the greatest pleasures and the fewest discomforts. He ended, by bidding me make up my mind to depart immediately, as my very opposition to his wishes shewed the necessity of my conduct being determined at once.

In four-and-twenty hours I was on the road to Wurtzburg, with a deep and settled melancholy crushing down every youthful feeling, darkening all hopes, embittering all enjoyments. The beautiful scenes through which we passed might as well have been a desert ; the magnificent aspect of the city itself, with its amphitheatre of vine-covered hills, took not the slightest particle from the horror with which I beheld it. Plunged into the old convent of Oberzell, I pursued my studies under the direction of some of the monks ; and one of them especially, the prior of the place, took every means to soothe my wounded spirit and disappointed feelings, to gain my confidence, and to soften my lot. I was suffered to

retain, while under the preliminary instruction of the brothers, all the attendants and equipage to which my rank and prospects entitled me. My exercises and amusements were not forgotten ; and I might have been even more happy than I was before—for my rivalry with my brother no longer irritated and disturbed me—had it not been that the aspect of the cloister, and the presence of the monks, constantly kept before my eyes the prospect of that fate which seemed to me a darker interment than even that of the grave itself.

Though I resisted not my father's will,—though the pride of my nature would not descend to any further entreaty or petition ; yet, I concealed not my feelings, and expressed the melancholy and the gloom that I experienced, in my letters both to my father and to my mother. To my brother I never wrote—I know not well why. It might be a presentiment, but I cannot tell.

About this time, the Bishop of Wurtzburg invited me from the convent to spend a time with him in his splendid palace ; and, while I remained there, he displayed before my eyes all the luxury, the amusement, the enjoyment, which can be combined with high station in the church. I believe it was done at the suggestion of my father, in order to reconcile me to my profession, and to shew me that it was not so dull and lifeless as I imagined. But the effect was quite the reverse from that which he, probably, expected to be produced : my gloom grew darker ; my melancholy acquired only the greater intensity from the scenes of gaiety and splendour which were displayed before my eyes. I felt, indeed, that the profession of the church, especially in our religion, was as night, contrasted with the daylight activity for which man was born : that it was night—all night ; and, though the bright moon might shine upon it, and give even intense light and shade, it still remained the dark part of existence.

I felt that, though some might find a pleasure in the brighter spots on which the moonlight fell, the shadow and the obscurity were all for me. I felt, that the splendour, and the pageant, and the pomp, the luxurious feasting, the sly jest, the flowing wine-cup, were all stains upon a profession which must draw its brightness from a higher source. I felt, that he who therein would find enjoyment must derive it from the mind—from powerful enthusiasm, from aspirations above the world, from hopes and prospects beyond this mortal life. I felt—I felt, even then, young as I was, that to many a man, such motives, such inducements, might shed a splendour through the dark and gloomy regions of the cloister; and, if I could have derived a consolation from anything in my hard lot, it would have been from practising the austerities of the anchorite, and striving for the ennobling virtues and glorious enthusiasms of the saint. But, alas! I felt, also, that such things were not for me; that animal power and life was strong within me; that the fiery and impatient blood which flowed through my veins required the same fields wherein my ancestors had fought—required the same scenes in which they had mingled—required to act, and feel, and love; and not to freeze in the slow and feelingless current of a profession whose only warmth, and whose only light, are derived from the star which shines from beyond the tomb.

More sad, more gloomy, more desponding, I returned from the palace of the bishop to the monkish cloister. Despair was now at its height; I would put no restraint upon myself; I would make use of no exertion. I gave myself up to apathy and idleness; I never went forth to take exercise. I would read the dull books of scholastic theology which were open before my eyes; I would hear the duller lectures of the brothers appointed to teach me: but the lettered page scarcely passed beyond my eye, and affected not

my understanding; the droning lesson of my preceptor slept in my idle ear, and had no effect upon my brain, or on my heart. The good prior often tried to tempt me forth to ride or walk; and, as I acted upon no system—as that which hung upon me was gloom, not sullenness, I went wherever he asked me, I did whatever he bade. But the short walk that he led me along the bank of the river, or the slow pace of his lazy mule, afforded but little exercise to one accustomed from infancy to the wild sports of the forest, and the vigorous games of military aspirants. The greater part of my time I sat and mused on what might have been, and in those musings I grew old before my time.

Such a state of things could not go on long; and I had been absent from my home little more than a year, when I felt a sudden change come over my health. A languor fell upon me; my cheek began to burn, and my brow to ache; and I could hear the rushing of the red stream of life, as it poured, like some tumultuous torrent, along the course of my young veins. I felt that I was ill; I hoped that I was dying; and when the prior remarked my state of sickness, and demanded what he could do for me, I replied, “Nothing, but send me back to die at home.”

That request was immediately complied with; but, before the heavy vehicle in which I was placed had reached the spot where my paternal dwelling rears its massy walls and bastions above the river, recollection left me, and I was borne into the castle of my fathers in a state of wild delirium. I have no remembrance of anything that passed for several days. What I raved of I cannot precisely tell; but I have reason to believe, from some words that my mother let fall at an after period, that my thoughts and my words still turned upon the dark subject of my future fate. Let us pass over that, however, and speak of matters more important to my history.

When I awoke and found myself at home—would to God that I had never beheld that home again!—I found myself tended by my mother, and by several of her maidens; but by another person, also, whose dress bespoke her of a rank equal to our own, though her face was quite unfamiliar to my eyes. It was that of a girl of, perhaps, fifteen years of age,—young, and bright, and beautiful as the morning. Her figure was slight, and full of all the light elegance of youth; every line was moulded in symmetry, and every movement sparkled with grace. When first I beheld her gazing at me, the small and arching mouth, which neither the chisel of the sculptor nor the pencil of the limner ever equalled, was smiling to see a look of renovated health come back into my worn and haggard features; and the long, liquid eyes, shining through their dark eyelashes, like the evening star pouring its sweet light from the shadowy verge of night, beamed up with pleasure, to think that she should bear my mother the glad tidings of the first good change in my disease.

It was early in the morning, and she had stolen in to ask the nurse, who sat by me, the tidings of the night; and, as soon as she had heard them, and saw with her own eyes that I was better, she tripped away with a step of light, her heart thrilling with the joy she was to give to others. The first rational words I had spoken for many days were to inquire who she was; and the reply of the nurse, that it was the Lady Leonora of Weilberg, explained to me the whole. I had seen her when we were both children; and, even at that early age, I had heard that she was destined for my brother's wife. Oh, hateful custom, abhorrent to all the sweet sympathies and finest feelings of man's nature, which binds together, without one sympathetic tie, without one link between heart and heart, the unwilling hands of two lordly

slaves to custom ; binds them, even in the cradle, to the fate which is to make them miserable for ever ! Leonora was destined, almost from her birth, for the bride of my brother ; and, on her father's death, she had been removed, according to his will, which appointed my father her guardian, to the paternal mansion of her future husband. There I now found her, in her surpassing loveliness ; and there, during the long period of my slow convalescence, she attended me with the care and affection of a sister, and called me ever by the endearing name of brother.

If I envied him before, how did I envy my brother Ferdinand now ! But let it not be thought that I weakly, that I criminally, encouraged feelings which could only make me more miserable than I was. I envied him the more, only because I saw that a new star was destined to shine upon his lot, but I would not suffer myself to think that the star might ever have been mine. She called me brother, and I was determined to look upon her as a sister : I felt that I could love her better than I had ever loved my brother ; I felt that no harsh word, no cutting gibe from those sweet lips, would ever turn even for a moment, the better feelings of my heart to gall. I took a pleasure in fancying that she, by her gentleness and kindness, might create a new bond of union between myself and Ferdinand, which might, perhaps, tend to soften the younger brother's lot. Great pleasure did I find in that idea—much pleasure, much dangerous pleasure, perhaps, in thinking of her. I had her society, also, all to myself : my father and my brother were still absent with the army ; my mother had lost much of the activity of youth ; and, as strength and health returned in the free air of my native hills, as,—with every breeze that fanned the woods, and every morning that blushed freshly through the eastern sky, lighting up for my eyes a world of dear objects and old ac-

customed sights—the calm pulse of health began to beat more and more strongly in my veins, as the ruddy hue returned into my cheek, and the light of life and energy beamed up once more in my eye, we would wander together through the scenes around, and talk of all the happy themes of youth, and hope, and innocence. I can look back upon those moments with satisfaction; they were bright, they were pure, they were unalloyed.

At length, however, came a letter from my father, commanding me, in somewhat stern terms, to return to Wurtzburg as soon as my health was fully re-established. Oh, how it changed every feeling, in a moment, into gall and bitterness! I had known, it is true, that the time must come; but, as before, I had wilfully closed my eyes. Now, however, that they were opened, the dull, heavy weight fell back upon my heart again, and seemed to crush it into the very earth. So great was the change, so apparent to all eyes, that my mother instantly sent for the leech who had attended me in my sickness, and bade him visit me in my chamber, fearful that the state of melancholy into which I had fallen might make me relapse into illness.

When he came, I was gazing forth from my window upon the windings of the river, with my hands clasped together, and my eyes fixed in intense and painful thought. It was easy for any one to see that the objects which presented themselves to my view were not those with which my mind was busy; and the leech, who dwelt in the castle, and knew all that had passed before, found no difficulty in divining what was the matter which occupied my thoughts.

He was a calm, meditative man, who had passed much of his early life with the armies in Italy. He was versed in many an art besides his own, but in none more than in that of reading the human heart; and, approaching me with a

serious air, he sat down beside me, saying, "You are grave, Count Henry, you are sad ; but let not your sadness go too far ! It may injure your health, as I much fear it has done before."

"Health ! my good friend," I answered,—“what is health to me ? What is the benefit to me, of power to wield a sword I must not draw, of strength for manly sports I must not practise ? Small store of health will serve my turn till death close my eyes.”

"Count Henry, you are wrong !" he said. "Pray mark my words, and I will be physician to your mind, as I have once been to your body. You think the loss of health but little—and so it might be, if it did but bring certain death to those who are weary of the world. But such is not the case ! Death follows not, like a servant, at the bidding of every one who casts away the greatest of God's corporeal blessings ! Instead of doing so, the dark King of the grave sends messengers to vindicate his insulted power, and drag him who so offends, by slow and painful steps, to the porch of that gloomy judgment-hall, where he must wait long ere he be allowed to enter. Those messengers are slow sickness, feebleness of body, loss of mental power, impotence of thought and actions, long burning fever, restless pain, and many an agonising pang inside. But, even could you obtain death so easily, have you any right to seek it ? Is not your life valuable to others ? may not the time come when it would be valuable to yourself ?"

"Never, never !" I replied. "In the bitter fate to which I am doomed, no time can come at which death would not be welcome."

"Your father," he said, in the same calm, serious tone, "and your brother have gone forth to lead armies, to do great deeds, and acquire great fame ; and have left you to

wither in a cloister, till such time as you can receive the cold and barren splendour of a bishop's mitre. It is, certainly, a hard fate for a youth of strong passions and an eager temperament. It is a hard fate: but yet, how many things might alter it: how many chances, in this ever-changing life, might occur, from day to day, to place you in a different situation, to call you to different pursuits, to open for you the path which you are most eager to follow! The life of each man in the battle-field is a life of peril. It is but a month since that your brother was wounded in a skirmish—slightly, indeed, but it might have been severely—it might have been unto death. Then, what a change——”

“ Hold, hold!” I exclaimed, with a crowd of wild, confused, and startling images rising up before my mind, like phantoms conjured up at the word of a sorcerer. “ Hold, hold! let me think!”

I did think: I thought with an intensity that was almost painful. Visions of splendid joy passed before the mind's eye; grand hopes, bright imaginings, dreams of delight. The free, the wide, the beautiful world seemed opened before my footsteps; the fetters seemed stricken off the limbs of my spirits; and I felt like the imprisoned bird when it sees the door of its cage opened, and the infinite expanse of heaven laid wide before its wings. Such was the colouring of the first rush of thought which his words brought across my mind. But, suddenly, there came a recollection—a fearful recollection: the voice of conscience, the voice of God, spoke to my heart, and asked me how all these splendid things were to be brought about? By a brother's death! I saw the dark, polluted stream of evil mingling with the sparkling current of my brightest hopes: I perceived at once, with keener discernment than the eye of youth can often attain, that the wishes, and the dreams, and the anticipations,

founded on such a basis, must all be criminal. It seemed as if the Almighty, in his mercy and his foresight, had spread out before me, with terrible distinctness, the picture and the plan of all those tortuous ways by which the mighty and tremendous spirit of evil might lead such thoughts into actual crime and everlasting destruction.

“Hold, hold, good friend!” I cried; while my brain reeled, and my heart throbbed with the struggle between the glittering hopes and brilliant wishes on the one hand, and the dark and awful fears on the other. “Hold, hold, good friend! Leave me—leave me to thought, I beseech thee; I will speak with thee more to-morrow.”

He paused, and fixed his eyes upon me steadfastly for a moment—I felt that he was reading my very soul; and then, without speaking, he turned away and left me. For several hours I remained alone: but the suddenness with which those ideas had been brought upon me had awakened my spirit at once to their nature and their consequences; and I pondered gloomily, fearfully, anxiously, upon that dark theme, till, at length, somebody knocked at the door of the cabinet in which I was sitting, and Leonora entered. She was looking more beautiful than ever; for in her eyes, and over her whole countenance, was spread a look of sad and thoughtful interest, and I felt that I myself was the object thereof. But that resplendent beauty, that look of affectionate regard, had anything but the effect which it might at one time have produced. It roused me from the dreaminess of thought into which I had fallen—it roused me at once, it is true; but it roused me to active determination. Instead of covering over the danger with still brighter hopes, with still more ardent aspirations, it taught me at once to see the precipice on which I stood. It shewed me that one wrong thought suffered to remain, one bright hope left to seduce me

on, and I might linger through the next few years—a wretch living on the hopes of his brother's death!

She asked me, kindly and gently, why I had shut myself up there alone, estranged from the company of my mother and herself? She told me that my mother was fearful and apprehensive concerning me; and added, that servants had passed through the room more than once—I had not seen them—finding me still sitting in the same position, without taking notice of anything.

“I have been thinking, dear Leonora,” I replied, “over my hard fate, in being obliged to quit all the scenes and the people that I love, and return to a profession for which I have so strong a distaste. But, as it is my father's will,” I added, “my utmost exertions shall be used to bear my lot, not only with patience, but with cheerfulness.”

I followed her to the chamber of my mother, and there repeated the same tale; and though I spoke it gravely—nay, sadly, I saw that it was a great relief to her; and I learned that she wrote instantly to my father, to communicate the determination I had taken. Leonora looked sad, when I myself named my departure with but the interval of one day: but she and my mother strove to cheer me; and, seeing more deeply into my feelings than others had done, they talked not to me of the wealth, and power, and splendour of the princes of the Church of Rome—of the amusements, occupations, and happiness, which might be open to me as an ecclesiastic. They never mentioned a topic that they knew was painful; and that evening passed by in peace.

On the following day I went out early to meditate again by myself; and, as I returned through the woods which cover the table-land of those high rocks that overhang the river, I met the physician walking on, with a book in his hand. It was at a spot where the crag rather overhung its base; and I

had paused for a moment on the brink, suffering my eye—while my mind was far otherwise occupied—to trace the swallows, as they wheeled, in dizzy flight, half-way down towards the stream, cutting the thin blue air in the profound depth below me. The approaching step roused me from my reverie ; and, as I turned, the leech raised his eyes from the book he was reading, and gave me good-morrow. He said nothing more : but, as I had seen, on the preceding day, that he had dived more deeply into my feelings than other men could do, I determined not to leave my thoughts or resolutions unexplained.

“ You have been reading, sir,” I said ; not well knowing how to begin, and fixing my eyes on the book in his hand, which was written in a character I did not understand.

“ Yes,” he answered, with his usual serious smile : “ it is a treatise upon poisons, by a learned Arabian physician ; in which he shews that the deadliest drugs that we possess, given in a small and proper dose, prove the most excellent remedies ; while the most valuable medicines, unskilfully administered, or taken in too large a quantity, become the most noxious poisons.” He paused, and fixing his eyes full upon me, added—“ It is the same with the medicines of the mind. Let me hope, Count Henry, that you have not taken too large a dose of that which I left with you yesterday.”

“ I trust not,” I replied. “ The effect which it has had is this : I have resolved to go back to Wurtzburg to-morrow ; to pursue my duties to a close, without intermission ; and, as soon as the church allows, to take those vows which are to bind me to a profession that I detest.”

“ No bad effect,” he replied, gravely ; “ but not such as I intended. Count Henry, you are afraid of yourself ; and you apprehend that the idea of your brother’s death—which I should have thought would have suggested itself, amongst

the ordinary probabilities of human life, to any man of quick imagination—may lead you into criminal wishes, or thoughts that are in themselves evil. Have more confidence in yourself! I pointed it out, merely as one, out of a thousand chances, which might make an alteration in your fate; but, as you have applied the motive I have given you wrongly, I must give you another, which, if you use it wisely, will counteract the bad effect of the first. You seem to have forgotten, that no man can force you to take a vow with which you are unwilling to bind yourself. No vow need be taken for several years to come; and the ultimate determination of your fate remains in your own hands.”

His words again threw me into a deep fit of thought. He presented my position in an entirely new light to my eyes; and hopes again—better, brighter hopes—began to rise up, and clear away, once more, the shadows that had fallen upon me.

“Far be it from me,” continued the physician, after watching for a moment or two the varied expressions that must have chased each other across my countenance,—“far be it from me, Count Henry, to advise you to disobey the will of my noble lord, your father. On the contrary, strive, as far as it is in your nature, to bend your wishes to his. Pursue your studies for the church; endeavour to discover all which may make that fate more agreeable; seek out every source of happiness therein; and if, when the time comes that irrevocable vows must be taken, you find you can endure the state they would force upon you, bind yourself, by all ties, to a profession which, dealing with the soul of man, offers, when justly used, a nobler dominion than that which controls and restrains the mere corporeal creature. But, in the meantime, impair not your health by useless thoughts and vain regrets; weaken not the strength of which, at many

an unknown moment, circumstances may require the exercise ; lose not the vigorous skill and knightly accomplishments which many a chance might render the befitting graces of your future station. Thus, at all events, you keep for yourself the choice, when the moment of election arrives. Possessed of all those qualities, and all that knowledge, suited either to the profession of arms or the profession of the church, you may choose which you will. If you find that your spirit will not bear the load which is cast upon it, throw off that load, with the cassock they would thrust upon you ; and, claiming nothing from any one, choose your own path, fight your own way to fame, and make yourself, as many a man has done before, a name, a fortune, and a station, in the annals of your country."

There was magic in his words—the magic, it might be, of a keen and searching spirit—but still they once more changed every feeling, and caused a complete and sweeping revolution in every thought. They worked, as those he had before spoken, with greater power than he intended, hurrying me on to resolutions, when he only sought to suspend any rash determinations. Happy is he, who, with eloquence to move our hearts, has skill enough to move them only to the point he aims at. I went far beyond. He called to my remembrance—he placed before my eyes, in open day, that my fate was in my own hands ; that my vows could not be forced ; that, sooner or later, I could decide for myself : and I decided at once. Present opposition, I knew, was useless ; but I resolved to lose not a moment, to waste not an hour, to husband my strength, to recall all the arts and exercises which had been taught me, and—far from my brother, but with a greater or more inspiring motive than could ever be his—to strive, as I had before striven, to excel him in all those points which affected his fate, and seemed to have no

relationship with my own. The physician smiled to see the change he had worked ; but this time he knew not how complete it had been. He said but little more, however, and that little was a caution not to let my wishes or purposes be too apparent.

I returned to the castle an altered being. Leonora gazed on me with surprise : and calling her by the sweet name of sister, I passed the remaining hours of my stay in that gay and light, but sparkling conversation in which we had never yet indulged. There was a deeper current of thought ran below ; but it was covered by the light ripple of the surface, and there were no keen eyes upon me to fathom the stream that sparkled with such a sudden gaiety. For my mother's part, she was completely deceived ; and wrote, as I afterwards found, to my father, to tell him that, after a fit of melancholy, I had become fully reconciled to his will, and had returned to Wurtzburg, not only prepared to resume my studies with alacrity, but cheerful and contented, as I used to be in former years.

Once more I left my paternal roof, but with altered feelings, and a mind made up to work out its own destiny. Did the image of Leonora, her summer beauty, her gentle, tender deeply feeling heart, her bright and sparkling mind, full of glowing fancy and poetic thought—did her image ever come across my memory, to darken it with a wish that could not be gratified ? No ! Once, and for a single instant, perhaps, I thought how I might have been blessed with such a being as that : but the next moment I remembered that she was promised to my brother—that she was a part, the richest part, of his bright portion ; and I declare here solemnly, in the face of heaven and of the grave, that, at that hour, I would not have robbed him of one grain of all his golden prospects—no, not to wear a crown. All I hoped,

all I wished, was not to be rendered miserable because he was happy. "Let the full sun shine upon him," I said, "as fate had ordered it so, but do not force me to dwell for ever in the shadow. Surely he can enjoy his bright day, without keeping me from the light of heaven."

As to Leonora, though, full surely, my fancy was wild and wandering, yet there I did what was but right : I would not suffer imagination to rest on that sweet being ; the wildest latitude that I gave my thoughts was but to hope that some day—some far and future day, when, casting off the dull, gloomy gown, I had won for myself renown in arms, and conquered fortune—I might, perchance, gain a being like her, to be the companion of my brightest hours, and share all the sweeter, gentler, happier feelings of my heart.

I returned to Wurtzburg, then, with my mind made up, and my resolutions taken, with one deep and all-engrossing conviction acting upon me as an impulse. It was, that, in order to accomplish that at which I aimed, I must rouse up, employ, exercise, acuminate every faculty or quality of mind and body : that if, in the times past, I had let any of the energies of my nature sleep, I must now waken them to full exertion, and learn to guide and direct them with such skill, that when the time to announce my decision to all the world had arrived, and I had to break through every bond with which they thought to enthrall me, I might be found capable of standing unsupported against all opposition, and of making my way forward under every adverse circumstance.

On re-entering the cloister, then, a change, remarkable to all eyes, had taken place in my conduct. I no longer applied to the lectures that were given me, or to the books placed in my hand, with the dull and drudging air of an apathetic or an unwilling scholar : I studied keenly and intensely. By the knowledge which I had acquired before, I easily made myself

master of all the stores of ancient learning. I practised the powers of the rhetorician and the orator : and though, at heart, I despised the subtleties of the schoolmen, I took a pleasure in arguing down and confounding those who had made the logician's art the study of their lives. All that was elegant, and all that was graceful, too, I sought for and cultivated zealously ; and, dreaming of courts as well as camps, of the council-chamber as well as of the field, every art and accomplishment of that day I strove eagerly to add to the science of the politician and the learning of the churchman.

In the exercises of the mind passed one half of my time : the other half, not only with the prior's consent, but by his counsel and advice, I spent in the manly exercises to which I had been accustomed ; in ruling and managing the fiery horses which my father's liberality enabled me to keep, in hurling the disc, in drawing the cross-bow, in wielding the sword or the mace. With the attendants, too, that were allowed me, I would break the lance, or ride at the ring, or devise mock skirmishes and battles, and practise all the feats of the stout man-at-arms.

There is nothing on earth that can resist energy of determination ! With it for our weapon, we can conquer all obstacles, we can set the heel upon all difficulties, we can triumph over our own defects, we can supply our own wants, and gain strength even from our own weaknesses. With such energy was I inspired. My health, which had seemed likely to give way, returned with redoubled vigour, my corporeal frame expanded, my mental powers increased : and the progress that I made in everything, completely dazzled the good prior and his brethren, and made them shut their eyes to the fact, that I was devoting myself much more to military and political acquirements than befitted even a German bishop in a troublous and tumultuous age. The

prior, who held communication with my father from time to time, wrote him such accounts of my zeal and progress, that all his fears of any resistance on my part were at an end. The number of my followers was increased, my purse was always kept running over, and I heard many a scheme propounded for hurrying me on with scarcely decent rapidity to the highest stations in the church.

I had nearly reached nineteen years of age when my father and my brother returned from the wars in Italy; and, so satisfied was the count with what he had heard of my conduct, that he wrote to me to come from Wurtzburg to meet them at the castle on their return. He fixed the day himself; and, with just time enough to accomplish the journey, I set out from the convent, with a train befitting the nobleman far more than the destined churchman, and arrived on the very morning which had been appointed.

My father and my brother had not yet arrived; but I was received with joy by my mother, and with many a bright smile by Leonora. It was long now since either of them had seen me, and my mother could not sufficiently admire the change which had taken place in my person. I had grown both tall and vigorous, and had exchanged the somewhat effeminate beauty of my boyhood for the bronzed cheek and robust limbs of manhood. Leonora had seen me before, as I have stated; but she had never beheld my brother since we were all mere children; and, as we stood upon the ramparts of the castle, after the first movement occasioned by my return had subsided, and gazed along the road towards Vienna, she asked me, with a playful smile, if Ferdinand was like me?

A sudden thrill—it was not of pleasure, and yet I must not call it painful—passed through my heart at these words, and seemed to take away my breath. I turned my

eyes to gaze upon her—she was lovely, very lovely ; but, finding that I did not reply, she lifted those starlike eyes to mine, and repeated the question.

My mother answered for me. “ Oh, no,” she said : “ very, very different !” She ended, with a sigh : but there were feelings at my heart which frightened me, and I would not inquire, even in thought, what that sigh meant.

We continued to gaze along the road where my father and his train were expected soon to appear ; and as, from the height on which the castle was placed, we could trace it winding over the country for many a mile, we often deceived ourselves with the appearance of some distant objects moving on towards us, and shaped them, in imagination, into the forms that we expected. We remained thus watching for nearly an hour, and were about to turn away disappointed, when a single horseman, whom we had scarcely noticed, attracted our attention by turning from the highway into the road that led directly to the castle. We now watched him onward with some interest ; and it was not long ere he approached the gates, for he was riding at full speed. In a few minutes after, a packet was delivered to my mother. It contained letters from my father for all who were present ; but they were of the same tenour, merely telling us that he had been detained at Vienna, and should not reach his home till the end of the week.

The week passed, and my father’s arrival was again delayed. Another week went by, and another, before he came. Thus was I, one whole month, in the bright and ardent days of youth, full of imagination, endued with strong passions and intense feelings, left almost alone with the loveliest being that my eye ever rested upon through life ; finding daily new sympathies between her soul and mine, new points of similarity, new links of association. Oh,

God, that that month could have been blotted out from time ! Oh, that it might never have existed, or passed differently ! Yet, think not that, in word or deed, either of us gave way to one human weakness. It was in the heart, and the heart alone, that thoughts and feelings, armed one against the other, maintained the dreadful and still increasing conflict. At first, we might yield, perhaps, to feelings which we believed were innocent : we loved each other's society, we sought it, we enjoyed it ; we let imagination take wing, and flee whithersoever she would ; we talked of a thousand feelings, and fancies, and pleasures, that were in common. She would sing to me, and nature and art had both joined to make those songs the most touching that ever fell upon my ear ; and I would either accompany her upon the lute, as I had learned at Wurtzburg, or would join my voice with hers, and pour forth along with her, in the fanciful words of others, feelings that were but too strongly gathering around my own heart.

Ten days had scarcely passed, however, before we both became alarmed. She remained in her own chamber, and scarcely saw me but when my mother was present. I betook me to the woods, and passed half my time in hunting the grey boar or chasing the fleet roe. But still we often met : we could not help it : there was no excuse for avoiding it ; and when we did meet, our mutual eyes would sometimes gaze into each other, and my heart would burn to tell of all it felt, to speak with her upon the very danger of our situation, to consult with her upon the best means of avoiding further evil, and of guarding ourselves against feelings which could produce nothing but misery to both. I fondly, I foolishly fancied, that with such confidence once established between us, and with the mutual wish and strong determination to do what was right, we should find it easier, supported by the

rectitude of our own hearts, to shape our conduct as became us both.

Perhaps, after all, it might have been so ; but the experiment was never made. I feared to trust my tongue with that theme, lest it should speak evil words, that could never be recalled : and, at length, while the struggle was still fierce within me, some soldiers arrived, as harbingers of my father and my brother ; and, an hour before sunset of the same day, the whole cavalcade was seen approaching the gates. We went forth to the steps of the hall to meet them ; and I could see Leonora first blush deeply, and then turn deadly pale, as she followed my mother. My heart, too, beat painfully ; but so strong was my repugnance to one evil thought, that my brother's voice, heard as we were approaching the door, was the gladdest sound that I had heard for years. I had not seen him since we parted on our several ways. The boy had become a man ; but he was the same as a man he had been as a boy, both in person and character. He had grown broad and powerful, but not, as I had, tall : and his first speech to me was a jest on the point where I could bear it least.

“ How now, my priestly brother ? ” he exclaimed, as he mounted the steps towards us ; “ how now ? Why, you have preserved those glossy, curling locks, which ought to have been sacrificed long ago at the shrine of our Lady of Ander-nach : but thou art right, Henry, thou art right ; never become a shaveling a day before the time. How fares my lady mother ? ” he continued, in nearly the same tone. “ The Lady Leonora ! ” he proceeded ; “ fair lady, by your leave : ” and he kissed her cheek, which, from its marble paleness, changed at once to burning red.

I will not pause on all that followed. My father embraced me warmly, gazed upon the form that now towered above his own, let his eye run over each strong limb, and then remained

silent, with a grave brow and thoughtful look, for more than a minute. "Fate might have arranged it better," he murmured, when he had done his contemplation; and then, turning, entered the hall with my mother. Festivity and rejoicing succeeded; and, during the two days that followed, I fancied that I saw the eye of my brother rest often thoughtfully upon me and Leonora, especially if a chance word happened to pass between us. She must have thought so too, for, whenever it so happened, the colour mounted high into her cheek, and her eye was cast upon the ground. I felt that this could not go on, and that the sooner it was brought to an end the better. On the second evening, therefore, after their return, I chose a moment when I was alone with my father, and announced my design of going back to Wurtzburg on the following day. "I have seen you return safe and well, sir," I said; "and it does not become me to remain too long amongst scenes and circumstances of which fate is likely to deprive my after lot."

My father mused for a moment. "I believe thou art right, Henry," he said; "and yet, my boy, I am sorry that it must be so. Nevertheless, stay over to-morrow; there are to be some spears broken in the tilt-yard, and I would fain see whether those strong limbs of thine could yet strike a good stroke, if they should ever have to draw the sword for the preservation of thy future mitre."

I smiled, and bent my head: and the next morning I took my station with my brother in the tilt-yard, to run a course against any of the gentlemen who had followed my father from the war. My brother and I broke five spears a-piece, against different opponents, and none could stand against us. But, though he was three years my senior, I believe there was no one present who awarded him any superiority over myself in the use of arms. He himself was

piqued; and, when no other adversary appeared, he exclaimed, "Now, Henry, let you and me break a lance together." But I threw the one that I had to a page, and sprang from my horse, replying, "Not with you, Ferdinand,—not with you."

"What! are you afraid?" he exclaimed, raising his visor, with a laugh. But I took two steps forward to where he stood, and, leaning on his horse's saddle, I looked full, but calmly in his face, when I replied, "I am afraid of nothing under God's heaven, Ferdinand, but to do wrong!"

His countenance changed in a moment; and, springing from his horse, he clasped my hand warmly in his. Some hours after, I was standing alone in the lesser hall: I had paused, I know not why, before two crossed swords, which hung between the oak-branches, when suddenly Leonora stood beside me. I turned at the sound of her step, as she was passing through the hall, and she paused immediately on seeing me, lifting her eyes to mine, as if there were something struggling in her breast for utterance. I was silent, for I dared not trust my voice with words when we thus met alone; but I could not help gazing on her still, and I am afraid that the sad—ay, and the tender feelings of my heart towards her, found expression in that glance.

"They tell me, Henry," she said, at length, with a look as sad and as anxious as my own,—“they tell me that you are going to leave us to-morrow.”

"It is better that it should be so, Leonora," I replied; "it is better that it should be so." And, as I spoke, I raised her fair, soft hand to my lips, adding, "I will now bid you farewell; for it may be many years before we meet again."

She had become very pale; but she replied, in a low tone, "Farewell, Henry—farewell!—It is better,—yes, it is better—farewell!" And, casting down her eyes, as if she was resolved not to look upon me again, she crossed the hall,

and disappeared by the door which led towards my mother's apartments. I remained standing in the midst of the hall, with feelings struggling in my heart, to which all that I had ever felt before was like summer rain compared to the tempest.

At supper, Leonora did not appear : she was not well, my mother said ; but, when I looked into my mother's face, I fancied that I saw the trace of tears. My father was grave, and somewhat stern ; my brother was full of life and merriment ; but, oh ! how harsh and grating was that merriment to my ears ! By daybreak, on the following morning, I set out for Wurtzburg.

It was rather more than a two days' journey ; but I did it in less than two days, for there were fierce and hasty feelings at my heart, which made me hurry on at speed, and took from me all consideration for the poor beast that bore me, or the men that followed. When I arrived at the abbey, I had wrought myself up to such a state of mind that I dared not see the prior, lest the truth should break from my heart at once ; but, telling the porter who opened the gates, to say I was fatigued, I went to my solitary chamber, and, casting myself down, I gave up my whole spirit to the thoughts of Leonora. Then—then, for the first time, I really felt the hardship of the fate to which I had been destined ; then I felt what it was to be cut off from love, and all its bright hopes and entrancing promises ; then I felt what it was to drag on a cold and lifeless being amidst the gay and cheerful world ; then I shuddered at the icy fate that debarred me from all the warm companionships, the sweet relations of domestic life. Yet, strange to say, in the wild and agitating tumult of sensations which raged within my bosom, I felt, for the first time in life, inclined to rush into the state which I abhorred ; to embrace the very profession, to the miseries of which love

had opened my eyes ; and to fix between me and the world that everlasting barrier which no after efforts could throw down. Leonora could never be mine. I had learned, in a fatal hour, to fix all the best affections of my heart on one bright object—an object beyond my reach, beyond my hopes—which I could never attain, which I ought never to dream of ; and why, I asked myself—why should I linger on in a world which, without that object, was all dark, lonely, cheerless, cold—without interest, without expectation, without hope, without joy ?

But it is all in vain to attempt depicting what I felt, or what I thought. It is all vain—utterly in vain ! My thoughts and my feelings were a wild chaos of confused and painful sensations ; and the whole of that night, and part of the ensuing day, passed as one lapse of agony. At mid-day, on the following morning, the prior entered my chamber, and, sitting down beside me, he demanded, “ What is this, my son ? thou hast neither been to matins, nor to mass, nor to the morning meal.”

“ Father,” I replied, “ I am not well ; not alone in body, but in mind. I pray thee, bear with me for a few days, and if I seem strange, irregular, and wild, attribute it to a struggle with myself.”

“ Of what nature ? ” demanded the prior : “ remember that you are speaking to your confessor, as well as to your preceptor.”

I felt that I must give him some reply ; and I said, “ This occasional intercourse with the world, father, does my mind no good. It re-awakens feelings which I have sought to stifle ; and I am determined that I will no more return, even for a day, to my father’s dwelling, till my fate is irretrievably fixed for life.”

“ You are right, my son,” said the prior warmly ; “ you

are right—quite right, if such be the effect of visiting your family. Do it by no means; but exercise, as I see you are inclined, all the vigour of a powerful mind upon your resolutions, and you will soon succeed in conquering the effects of a temporary intercourse with a vain and idle world.”

“Bear with me,” I replied: “only bear with me, good father, for one short week, while the struggle is yet strong within me. Let me deal with my own thoughts alone; and I will answer for it, that ere that time be at an end, I shall have subdued myself to follow out my fate, as usual. Give me such books as are good for my state; whatever may occupy and engross my mind will be of some assistance; and I will read, night and day, to make up for my lost time.”

“It shall be as thou hast said, my son,” replied the prior; “no one shall trouble thee: but, read night and day, thou canst not; and thou must promise me every day to ride forth, for a time, lest thy health suffer.”

“I will, I will,” I replied; “but I will take no one with me. I cannot bear, in my present frame of mind, to hear the hoofs of a lordly train beating the ground behind me.”

Thus ended our conference; and for the four subsequent days I spent my time as I had proposed. Was my heart more at ease at their conclusion? Had my mind regained any of its calmness? Alas; no. Far from it; for I knew that every hour that passed,—I knew that every moment, as it flew, brought nearer and nearer that fatal day which was to give the hand of her I loved to another: every hour that passed, every moment that flew, shewed me, more and more, how deep, how intense, how passionate, how firmly rooted in my heart, were those feelings which had been growing up so silently in my bosom.

I scarcely could be said to sleep, during all those four days; and by the weariness of body, and painful activity of

mind, the moral balance was nearly overthrown. I found myself, more than once, speaking aloud thoughts over which I had no control. My ideas refused to fix themselves upon the subjects to which I would have dragged them ; and my mind, even with the objects, the agonising objects that it sought out for itself, seemed losing its firm grasp of everything, touching all that was painful to rest upon, and then flying off to things more painful still. It was on the fifth day after my arrival at the convent, and early in the morning, that a messenger arrived from my brother, bearing me a packet. It contained a letter, couched in the following few haughty words :—

“ I would fain see thee, my priestly brother ; so, if thou canst escape from the frock and the sandal, and wilt ride on the way hither, I will meet thee half way. To the castle thou must not come ; and thou hadst better not let thy rulers know that thou art coming hitherward. Set off on the morning that thou receivest this, and we shall meet about half way. Shave not thy crown till thou hast met me ; for I always think there is more cunning in a bald scalp and a grey amuce, than in flowing locks and an iron skull-cap. If an excuse be wanting, say that thou art gone to visit our good friend, the Bishop of Wurtzburg, who is now at Bischofsheim, and has sent hither to ask both thee and me to spend a week in saintly revelling with him.

“ Thine,

“ FERDINAND.”

I sat, with the letter before me, for an hour ; and dark, and strange, and wild, were the fancies it conjured up. I doubted whether I should go—I doubted whether I should stay ; and, whichever way my veering inclination turned,

there came a sick and sinking apprehension over my heart, which surely was the presentiment of coming evil. At length, I started up, and, calling one of the attendants, I bade him saddle a wild, strong horse, that I had not ridden for several weeks, and bring it round to the back gate of the abbey. It was done quickly, as a matter of course ; and, casting off my student's gown, I went out, and bade the servant to tell the prior, if he asked for me, that I should be found at Bischofsheim. I sprang upon the noble horse's back ; but, wild with rest, and vigour, and high blood, he reared and plunged, as if he would have cast himself down beneath me.

"You had better take some other horse, Count Henry," said the groom, "and let me bring down Selim's high blood before you ride him."

"I will bring down his blood," I replied, sharply driving my spurs into his sides, and forcing him through the gateway. The horse darted along the road like an arrow shot from a bow : and for miles and miles he bore me along at the same quick pace, without requiring word, whip, or spur, to urge him on. But when he flagged, I urged him forward ; and, ere the day was over, I was within ten leagues of our own dwelling. At length, a feeling of pity for the noble beast made me stop. I was in the midst of a forest, where I had often hunted, for our feudal dominion extended over all the lands around ; and I could easily have found the hut of some wood-cutter or forester, where I might have spent the night, at least, under shelter. But there was a carelessness of all things had come over me ; and, plunging into the forest, I sought a grassy spot, where the horse could find some food.

I cast myself down beneath a beech, and watched, with a sort of gloomy sympathy, the increasing shades of night, as they came, wave by wave, over the bright evening sky, like

the dark torrent of adverse fate pouring over a life that had opened all in brightness.

I was weary, but I slept not : I watched the stars as they burst forth, and the moon till she set ; and I saw the clouds roll up, and put out the lights of heaven. Heavy drops at length began to fall through the leaves of the beech and oak ; and, feeling an intense burning in my brain, I cast off the broad hat in which I had been riding, and let the shower fall amongst my long and tangled hair. It seemed a relief ; and then, for the first time, as morning was approaching, I fell asleep—if it deserved that name.

There was, indeed, some short period of perfect unconsciousness : the exhaustion of the body had triumphed over the irritation of the mind ; but, oh ! how soon the mind woke up in agony, though it left the body sleeping. Dark visions seized upon me ; dreams, vague but horrible, shifting and changing like the flickering lightning of the summer sky, but shewing forth, in every blaze, strange features and awful forms. The most distinct of all was the last.

I thought I heard a wild, shrill cry ; and, starting forward, I found myself in a room, with Leonora and my brother. As she lay upon a bed of state, he grasped her tightly with one hand, which was all dabbled in her blood ; and with the other, raised aloft, he was again driving a dagger into her bosom, from which the gore was already spouting in a full, quick stream. I sprang upon him—I seized the uplifted hand—I wrenched the dagger from his grasp—and, in the fury of the moment, I struck it into his heart. Then came another loud, long scream ; and, wildly opening my eyes, I found my horse bending his head down over me as I lay, and uttering a wild, shrill neigh, as if to call me to myself.

Day was already high in the sky ; and, putting the bridle in his mouth, I tightened the girths, and once more betook

me to the high road. It soon led me on through the woods, to the high rocky banks which overhang that sweet river which flows past my paternal home—that river, by whose banks, and in whose waters, I sported in my innocent boyhood—that river, on whose calm margin I had enjoyed all the sweet, harmless pleasures of expanding life—of life, without passions, or memories, or regrets—of life, composed alone of joys, and hopes, and expectations. Oh, that sweet river ! which I was destined never again to behold without horror, and agony, and remorse.

I followed the road as it climbed up the bank, and then, advancing to a spot where a tall rock stood outward, like a promontory, and beetled over the stream, I looked on, tracing the winding course of the river, and the line of the rich wooded heights above, and the highway breaking in and out of the forest, now running along upon the very verge of the precipice, now plunging in amongst the dark old trees. As I gazed, I saw a single horseman riding leisurely along towards me ; and a strange and apprehensive thrill came over me—a terror of I knew not what—a feeling as if a dark cloud had come suddenly between me and the sun. I rode on ; and, soon after, where the road again opened from the wood and skirted the top of the crags, I met my brother. His greeting was sharp and taunting, as usual.

“ Why, how now, priest Henry ! ” he exclaimed ; “ with thy garments soiled, thy long locks dishevelled, and thine eye haggard ! Thou lookest more like some wild gambler in an Italian inn, or some serviceable and unscrupulous *capitano* coming home from doing his lord good service on a rival, than the demure student of a college of priests ! ”

“ Ferdinand, taunt me not to-day ! ” I answered. “ I am in no mood to bear it. I am like a horse whose harness galls him, and a little thing will make him restive.”

“Why, what care I whether thou art restive or not!” he answered; “I have tamed wilder beasts than thou art, my good brother. However, thou art come to answer me a question or two; and mind that thou answerest truly.”

My heart burned with feelings which terrified me at myself; but I struggled for a time against the evil spirit; and I replied—“If I answer thee at all, Ferdinand, my answers shall be true; but I must hear thy questions first, ere I know whether they will have an answer or not.”

His brow grew flushed; and, with a curling lip, the sight of which is so difficult to bear, he said, “Thou hadst better answer—ay, and truly, too, or I may tie thee to one of yonder trees, and, with my stirrup-leathers, give thee such discipline as no monk’s hand has ever inflicted on thy shoulders.”

I was silent, for I dared not speak—and he went on: “How comes it that thou hast dared—my younger brother, and devoted to the cowl or gown—thou, who art bound to the altar—how comes it, I say, that thou hast dared to tread thy brother’s dwelling in his absence, and tamper with the heart of his promised bride? How comes it, pitiful priestling?”

“Whoever says I did so, lies in his teeth!” I answered.

“Lies!” cried he,—“lies!—*I* say it! Dost thou say I lie?”

I could bear no more. “Thou, or any one else!” I exclaimed. “Whoever says it lies!”

“By the blessed Virgin! I will teach thee to tell me I lie!” he exclaimed, spurring on his horse upon me, and striking me a blow with his clenched fist.

All the smothered fury of my heart broke forth: I drew the hunting-sword with which I was armed, and urged my horse on upon him. His blade was out in a moment; but,

with the mad wrath of Cain himself, I struck a blow directly at his head. He parried it, I believe—though I scarcely know; but, at all events, as it descended, it fell upon his horse's head, biting deep into the bone. The charger, mad with the pain, recoiled, plunged furiously, reared up—Oh, God! what would I have given, at that moment, to have been vowed to the cloister for ever! The precipice was behind him: the horse reared; Ferdinand struck it furiously with the pommel of his sword; the uncertain bank gave way beneath his feet, and horse and rider disappeared at once in the vague air beyond.

I sprang to the ground; I darted to the very edge of the precipice; but, ere I reached it, my brother and his horse were lying on the earth beneath. Three hundred feet full down had they fallen without a break; and there they lay, still, motionless, and silent! I gazed for several minutes, and my brain reeled; but not with the giddy aspect of the fearful steep down which they had fallen. It reeled with the terrible deed I myself had done; it reeled with the consciousness of the awful gulf into which I had plunged my soul. The first impulse, had I yielded to it, was to cast myself over also, and to end all the busy agony of life by that one fatal plunge. But, as I still gazed, there came up to my ear a faint, shrill cry; and I saw the horse struggle to rise up, on the narrow space of ground which lay between the river and the rocks, and, in the mortal anguish of his crushed state, spurning his helpless rider with his feet, roll over into the water! A wild, vague hope instantly crossed my mind, that life might yet be left—that I might not wholly be a murderer, and, running along seeking for a path, I found a way, steep and terrible enough, but which soon brought my eager steps to the spot where Ferdinand lay.

I gazed upon him, as he was stretched before me, with

the broad light of day upon his face!—and the last gleam of hope that was to cross my mind through life went out for ever. No living thing ever lay like that! The open eyes, the distended eyeballs, the arm doubled up under the back, the gore that drenched the ground all around, the fallen jaw and wide open mouth—every awful token shewed that death was there.

In an instant it seized upon me—the eternal, never-ceasing vulture of Remorse! My brain and my heart seemed on fire. My lip became as parched as if I had been wandering through the deserts of Arabia. I felt that life was all now one horrible, interminable night. The sun was darkened to me. Not a star was left in the sky. With man, with all my race, I was a stranger; there was no companionship, no sweet association for the murderer on earth. The dwelling of guilt was within my own bosom! The spectre of my brother pursued me for ever! The dark and mighty spirit of all evil had placed his flaming seal upon my brow!

Oh, could I but have believed that death was annihilation, how soon would I have buried all my agony of mind beneath the calm waters of the clear, unconscious stream! But I, who in the lightness of my boyish innocence, had always looked on death as some idle fear, but worthy of an infant or a nurse, now shrank from it as the most fearful fate that could befall me. To meet my brother!—to meet the brother whom I had slain, while his blood was yet hot upon my hand—his spirit yet fierce against his murderer!—to meet his spirit in the presence of Almighty God, the Creator of us both!

I could have called to the mountains to cover me: I felt the eye of God upon me, as upon him, who, jealous of the willing sacrifice, spilt the first human blood, and first saw death in all its fearfulness. And yet, I could not tear

myself from the sight of what I had done. I gazed, as if fascinated by some strange and terrible power: I gazed, and trembled, and clenched my hands, and beat my breast, in all the impotent anguish of despair.

Something touched me: and, turning round, I found that my horse had followed me from above by the steep and difficult path I had myself pursued—and now, as if he could comprehend my agony of mind, and sought to give me comfort, he had come close up to me and touched me, as I was writhing with the pangs of remorse.

“True, true!” I exclaimed, as if the dumb beast had spoken and counselled flight: “true, true!” and, springing on his back, I dashed my spurs into his sides, and galloped on over the broken rocks and stones that lay by the river-side.

He bore me gallantly on, and for a long way we went at full speed; but then he slackened his pace, and, letting the bridle fall upon his neck, I gave myself up to every terrible contemplation. Thought it could not be called; for it wanted all the golden links of thought. The chain—if there was a chain—was broken, severed, irregular. It was a conviction, an impression; a one, all-pervading, all-absorbing idea.

I had slain my brother! I had slain him who had sprung from the same blood; who had been nourished with the same milk; with whom I had sported in my infancy, and grown up in my boyhood. I had riven the kindred spirit from the kindred clay; and could I dream of any other theme but that? It absorbed all other ideas, as I have said. It was constantly before me; and my eyes, as if willing to league with my heart in punishing my crime, retained, with frightful accuracy, the ghastly, glaring image of the dead, as I had seen him lie, mangled and torn, upon the river's bank.

I thought of nothing; I heeded nothing; I marked not

the hours, nor the distance, nor the way. The horse paused and cropped the forest grass beneath me ; and, with my head bent almost to the saddle-bow, I sat pondering over that one awful theme. Hours passed by ; and, gradually, a broken remembrance of other things came upon me. I thought of my good resolves, my excellent purposes ; the forbearance which I had promised myself to maintain ; the firm endurance with which I had promised to adhere to right. And then I remembered how madly I had yielded to my passion ; and then, in frantic rage at myself, I snatched up the bridle, and, spurring on my horse, dashed through the woods, as if I had been chasing the deer or the boar.

Time, however, had slipped by without my knowing it ; and the sun, by this time, was hanging on the golden verge of the western sky. I scarcely saw it ; I scarcely saw anything around me. There were brown woods, and deep and shady dells, and wide barren-looking moors, and, as the sun set, there came a gleam of waters, and I remember swimming my horse across a narrow stream.

Darkness then fell around me : but still I galloped on. I chose no path, I sought no object ; but I fled on, as if from the messengers of fate. At length, the ground began to rise ; the trees fell away on either hand, and I soon found myself on the bald and barren summit of one of our high mountains, with nothing around me but the twinkling host of heaven. I drew in my rein, and gazed up towards the sky : and, oh ! what would I have given—there, beneath the calm, bright eyes that seemed looking out at me from the dark expanse—to have cast off for ever the weary load of life, if I could have cast off with it the heavier load of crime !

I paused not long : my horse seemed fretful and impatient, though we must have travelled far and long ; but, with a wild neigh, he hurried on over the short turf of the

mountain, as if attracted by something at a distance. I cared not, I heeded not, which way he went : my brain was still all troubled ; my thoughts turned inward ; and all that fell upon the outward sense made but a faint and momentary impression. On, on he dashed : and the rapidity of his motion seemed to stir up I know not what wild imaginations within me. The heat which had been in my brow and heart seemed to spread itself over all my frame ; thrilled through my veins like molten iron ; throbbed in my temples, tingled in all my limbs. Strange sounds came into my ears, and thin figures glided round me as I rode.

I had heard of spirits and of demons holding their nightly meetings on the grey mountain-tops, and now my eye beheld them all. A fire lay in the midst of my path : grim visages, and dark and horrible shapes, were seen moving around in the fitful glare. I strove to turn my horse aside, but he rushed straight on, and passed through the midst of the fire ; while shrieks, and cries, and blasphemies, and imprecations, rang in my ears—and shrill and screaming voices called loudly for me to come and join the revel of demons like myself.

Tell me not that it was the madness of an over-wrought mind : if it was a dream, it was more vivid than reality.

On, on went the horse like lightning : still the wild shapes and fearful voices pursued, hovered round me still as I went, and, with the swiftness of light, distanced far my horse, gleaming on the pathway wherever I turned. At length, I saw distinctly a stream—a little brawling stream—coming down amongst scattered rocks, and flowing past a broken bridge. I pushed my horse towards it, eager to escape the fearful beings that pursued me. He refused to cross ; I urged him furiously on ; there was a struggle and a strife—I felt we were falling : but, in a moment, consciousness went by, and I knew no more—

I awoke as from a dream, and gazed around me, with but faint and feeble recollections of all that had passed for many a year. I seemed to have returned to my childhood; for the images that first presented themselves to my mind were those of the sweet and early days of infancy. And, certainly, my strength of body well accorded with such thoughts. All vigour had left me; my head was bound up with many bandages; and, though I felt no pain, I had scarcely strength to turn myself as I lay. Gazing round, I perceived it was a splendid room; and, in the fretted woodwork from which the hangings fell, were carved the cross and pastoral hook, and bishop's mitre. Ecclesiastics, too, were in attendance upon me; and I saw plainly that I was in the palace of some high prelate of our church.

For some time I asked no questions, from the mere apathy of utter weakness: but, towards night, the Bishop of Wurtzburg stood by my bedside, and I remembered his face; though there was a vagueness about all my recollections, which made his countenance seem like one beheld in a dream. The moment after, however, another face appeared beside his, which had greater claims on my memory,—it was that of my father. He was dressed in deep mourning; and, as they gazed upon me, and talked together, I could perceive that they thought me still unconscious of what was passing round.

“He seems better—much better,” said the bishop.

“God grant it!” rejoined my father; “it would be too severe a blow to lose them both at once. All the hopes of my house crushed in one single day!”

“An awful dispensation, truly,” replied the bishop; “and one that should teach you not to set your affections too strongly upon any earthly thing.”

“I have taken that lesson already to my heart,” replied

my father. "But see, a change comes over his countenance! Consciousness must be returning. Where is the leech?"

"Here, behind," replied the bishop. And, in a moment after, at the prelate's sign, the surgeon who had attended me before, came forward, gazed upon my countenance for a moment, and then laid his fingers on my pulse.

"Give me the drug from the Thebais," he exclaimed, turning to one of the attendants. "The crisis is past—he will do well; but he must neither see nor hear aught that can affect him. My lord," he continued, addressing my father, "if you value your son's life, you will leave him entirely to my care for the next week. I will answer for his cure, if no one interrupts me; and I will not quit his chamber till he can quit it himself. But if he be allowed to see any body, or hear any tidings, either painful or joyful, I will not be responsible for the consequences."

"But little joy," replied my father,—“but little joy have I to impart to any one. But be it as you will.” And, so saying, he turned and quitted the chamber, leaving me with the surgeon and the attendants.

The man of healing addressed not a word to me during the two following days; but he seemed principally to apply himself to obtain for me long-continued sleep, giving me a drug which had evidently a strong soporific effect. Had he known all, he could not have done more wisely. Indeed, I have often thought that he must have possessed more than human knowledge; so immediately did he direct his proceedings to the ill of the patient, though he seemed to have no earthly means of discovering where that ill lay. He kept me, then, as far as possible, in a state of constant forgetfulness; taking care to strengthen the body by cordials and

restoratives—as if to invigorate it while its adversary slept—in order to carry on the fearful struggle which must take place at length between it and the mind.

Towards the end of the third day, I felt all my corporeal powers returning; and the leech judged fit to leave off the sleeping-draught. Then came back the thoughts that were worse than death; then came the memories that formed a living hell in my own bosom. The surgeon sat with me, all night; and he talked to me a great deal, speaking in a low, quiet, musical tone of voice, with the lamp shaded, and his eyes turned away. He spoke openly of my brother's death; he termed it the terrible accident that had happened to him: and told me, that the first thing which had caused alarm at the castle, was the report of some boatmen, who had found his horse drifted ashore. He then said, that it was evident that the animal had become restive with its rider, and had fallen over the precipice. "You know your unhappy brother's violence," he added; "and how likely he was to drive any animal into a momentary fit of madness."

His conversation was very strange. He spoke as if utterly ignorant of any share that I had had in that terrible event; and yet, from time to time, he threw in everything that could alleviate the weight upon my heart—everything which could suggest excuses to a wounded conscience, or offer motives for self-command and exertion. After briefly relating the event, he told me the effect it had produced upon my father. His first exclamation, the surgeon said, was—"I knew it would be so! I knew that his harsh passions would, some day, bring about his death."

"But when a messenger from the Bishop of Wurtzburg," continued the surgeon, "announced to him, that you also had been found lying in the woods hard by Bischofsheim, with your horse's back broken, and yourself severely injured,

—having, it was supposed, lost your way and fallen over the rocks, while coming to the palace in consequence of an invitation from the prelate,—your father’s agony knew no bounds. You are now his only child,” proceeded the surgeon; “and it is your duty, Count Henry, to take care of your own health and life, in order to soothe and comfort your parents’ declining years, and to keep up a noble family, which otherwise must pass away from the earth. The highest fortunes are before you; and you have duties to undertake and perform, which, to execute rightly, will occupy every thought, require every exertion, and will bestow happiness upon you in the very fulfilment of the allotted task. Let me beg you, therefore, to use all means, mental and corporeal, of regaining your vigour, and to gladden the hearts of your father and mother by the sight of the hope of their house fully restored to health and cheerfulness.”

Such was the tenour of his discourse; and, certainly, though he probed the wound in my heart down to the quick, he left it not without pouring in balm: balm incapable of healing it, but which soothed the pang, and gave strength to bear the anguish that remained.

Whether he divined aught of the truth, whether he suspected aught, or whether his words were merely accidental, I know not. I soon found, however, what it was to be an only son. My father’s anxiety now knew no bounds; he would not remain excluded from my chamber for the week he had promised—but I was now prepared to meet him. A change had taken place within me: despair itself seemed to have given me energy. I had taken my determination; I had made up my mind; I had exerted all the powers of resolution within me, in order to live and to enjoy. There had come upon me a hardened determination to derive from the act I had committed all the earthly benefits which could be thence

obtained. It was done, it was irrevocable ! Fate, I thought, had had its will ! It had stamped me for everlasting perdition : and I strove, with the firm sternness of despair, to prepare my mind to cast off all thought of the past—and, as every hope beyond the earth was, for me, at an end for ever—to enjoy the present, and to snatch the brief and fleeting pleasures of the world in which I live with the more eager zest, because they were all that could be obtained in compensation for the mighty sacrifice of my soul's eternal weal.

I little knew my own heart, however ; I little knew the stream of gall and bitterness which it was destined to pour forth and mingle with every sweet cup of worldly pleasure. I little knew that Remorse, like some fell enchanter, stood behind me, and prepared, as all the choicest gifts of earth were offered to my hand by Fortune, to change her splendid treasures ere they reached my grasp, and reduce them all to dust and ashes. Such, however, was to be my fate.

My father came, as I have said, and visited me before the week was out ; but he found me so much changed for the better, that joy and satisfaction at once spread over his countenance. In truth, I was every hour gaining more and more vigour ; for the strong resolution within me—a resolution suggested by the skilful words of the surgeon—supplied the place of the calm tranquillity of mind which is the best balm for the sick or exhausted frame. Finding me so well, my father sat with me for several hours ; spoke with me of future prospects, and of days to come ; and I found that everything was now, of course, to be mine. The wealth, and the station, and the honour ; the bright parental hopes, the warm affections, all the sweet relations of domestic life, were all, thenceforward, to surround my path : and he spoke, too, of that dearer, that tenderer love, which was to be the crowning prize of all—the mighty recompense of an awful and terrible deed.

I recovered rapidly. Daily I gained strength; conscience I resolved to trample under foot; the terrors of a future life I purposed to forget; and I laboured, with careful art, to gloss over to my own mind, with softening palliatives and fair excuses, the terrible deed that I had done. I tried to persuade myself that it was not actually my hand; I convinced myself that, in the words of the surgeon, he had irritated me to a pitch of madness; and, though I knew all the time that I was deceiving myself, yet I determined calmly—nay, reasonably, to be deceived.

I was soon able to rise, and soon able to go forth; although my head was still severely cut and scarred from the injuries it had received. But, before I was equal to a long journey, business of much importance summoned my father away, and he left me to follow as speedily as possible; bidding me hasten to join him at the castle, where my mother, he said, was anxiously expecting my arrival, as well as Leonora. As he pronounced that name, he smiled upon me with a meaning look; and I felt, as it were, a bright light flash up from my heart into my eyes.

I shall pause no more now upon minute events. I have told my crime; and for more than sixty years I have endured my punishment. It has come upon me in repeated strokes—blow after blow. An invisible hand has snatched at me in the moment of enjoyment, of glory and power, and plucked me headlong down from the height of fortune. Thrice came the cold shadow between me and the sun, and each time it extinguished a third part of the light of heaven. I will picture for you those three acts, and that will be enough.

In ten days after my father had left me, the surgeon consented to my setting out; but he accompanied me on the way. I was glad that he did so; for there were circumstances on that journey which I well knew might be terrible to encounter.

We took a sweep round, however, and avoided one spot which I dared not have passed just then. But, as we came near the castle, a brighter vision rose up before my eyes, and led me on. Leonora, in all her beauty, in all her gentleness—Leonora, as my own, presented herself to my imagination; and love, ardent, enthusiastic love—the only passion whose fiery nature seemed likely to conquer remorse—beat in my heart, and thrilled through every vein: no longer struggled against, no longer checked; but encouraged, heightened, dwelt upon, as a blessing in itself and in its hopes.

When I reached the castle hall, I was met by my father and my mother, and embraced tenderly by both; but my eye glanced round for Leonora. My father marked it with a smile, and replied to it, as if I had spoken. “She is in her own chamber,” he said; “she knows not of your coming to-day. We concealed it from her, for she is agitated at the thought of seeing you; knowing, as she does know, that her fate is to be linked to yours. Go to her, my boy! go to her,” he added; “I think neither of you seem very apprehensive of the tie which is to bind you to each other.”

I gladly heard those words, and hurried towards her chamber with a step of light. The door was open, and I went in at once, without announcement. As I entered, she was gazing from a window through which might be seen the bright sun struggling with the dark and broken masses of a past-by storm, and mingling the lurid clouds with crimson and with gold. She was lovelier than I had ever beheld her; though, raised over the high clusters of her rich, dark hair, was cast a light black veil, falling on either side of her head, and resting in beautiful folds upon her bosom. That veil was borne as mourning for my brother, and other parts of her dress betrayed the same sombre colouring; but her countenance, though it was grave, wore no expression of very deep

sorrow. On the contrary, the look was a look of hope ; as, with her head slightly bent, and her beautiful eyes looking forth through their long, dark lashes, towards the verge of the horizon, she seemed to contemplate the sun, scattering from his path the clouds before he set. Did her imagination find therein a type ? I do not know : but I have always thought, that those eyes were themselves like sunbeams ; and the faint smile which, at that moment, hung upon that small and delicate mouth, was surely like the dawn of a bright morning, ere the day—the beautiful and laughing day—comes forth from the dark temple of the night.

The sound of my step in her chamber roused her ; and, starting up, she turned round towards me. As soon as she saw who it was, she uttered a slight exclamation of joy, and sprang forward towards me. My arms were round her in a moment ; the long-suppressed feelings of our hearts broke forth : and at the same moment we burst into tears. They were the first I had shed. Hers were all joyful tears ; but mine, though they were certainly a relief, were mingled with bitterness. We wiped them away soon, however : and, unchided, unresisted, I pressed my lips again and again on her sweet mouth, and on her velvet cheek ; and then, drawing her arm through mine, I led her down to the hall, where my father and mother awaited us. That evening passed over in the tumultuous joy of gratified love—joy that obliterated, for the time, even the scars of remorse. There was, indeed, a suit of armour hung in the great hall, which I would willingly not have seen ; but I persuaded the rest that the great hall was chilly, and we retired to the lesser one, where I thought of Leonora, and forgot the past.

Another day rose upon us, and I found, or at least I fancied, that I was acquiring that mastery over thought—that rule over my own heart and my own soul, which could

stifle the voice of conscience, and bid the restless demon of remorse be still. I felt, however, that the harpy would neither quit my table nor my bed, unless her ravening appetite were glutted by strong excitement, administered both to the mind and to the body. My corporeal frame I exhausted by violent exercise ; and my mind found excitement enough in the acknowledged and open engagement between Leonora and myself. It was now that we found—or rather, it was now that we avowed to our own hearts—how deeply rooted, how intense, how overpowering had been the love which we had felt towards each other, even while it was dangerous, if not criminal. Leonora, it is true, had never by her own consent been contracted to my brother, but still we both had known that she was destined to be his wife ; and, certainly, the feelings which we now acknowledged to our own hearts, were such as must have shut me out for ever from my brother's dwelling, had she indeed become his wife. Now, however, to her that love was all happiness ; and to me, by the excitement it afforded, it was all relief—relief from the agony of memory. I spent whole hours with her, pouring forth, with every variety of manner and expression, the deep, the intense, the passionate emotions which the very sight of her beaming eyes, the lightest touch of her small hand, called up in my bosom. Nor did she conceal, nor in any degree attempt to veil, that her whole heart was mine ; and no one could look upon that countenance, or gaze into the depths of those lucid eyes, and not know that there was beneath a well of strong and impassioned feelings, which would make the love, once acquired, as bright, as pure, as unchangeable, as the diamond.

There was nothing to oppose our love—there was nothing to struggle with it ; and yet its unbounded intensity seemed to increase every day : while my father, whose great

anxiety now seemed to be that his eyes might see my children before he died, hastened on the preparations for my nuptials with Leonora with as much rapidity as a decent respect for the memory of his eldest son permitted.

At length the wished-for day arrived. The castle was crowded with guests ; feastings and revelry pervaded the halls ; and the Bishop of Wurtzburg himself arrived, to give greater dignity to the ceremony. In festivity, and in music, and in sports, the day went down ; and at midnight, according to the custom of our family, the chapel was crowded with our guests. The retainers of the house, in complete arms, lined the aisles ; and, in the midst of pomp, and splendour, and glittering array, and waving plumes, and smiling faces, and all that could give the semblance of joy, I led my beautiful, my beloved, to the altar, and received her hand, in the presence of all her race, and in the presence of all mine. How shall I tell—how shall I describe the feelings with which I placed the ring upon her finger with which I felt that it was accomplished—that she was mine—mine, for ever ! Let it not be supposed, that at that moment the terrible deed that had gone before was felt as any alloy to the thrilling joy of that event : far from it. Strange as it may seem, the knowledge of the great and mighty price that had been paid ; the indefinite feeling—for thought I still shut out—that, for the jewel I had won, had been sacrificed the best possession of a mortal being, his soul's innocence, rendered that jewel but the more estimable in my eyes, and the gladness of having gained it more intense and overwhelming.

Leonora left the chapel with my mother ; and, with a heart, the emotions of which no tongue can tell, I hastened to my own apartments. My heart was all on fire—my spirit was a dream of joy. But, while two of my attendants were

aiding me to strip off my wedding-garments, my eye lighted on a small packet, which lay upon the dressing-table.

"What is that?" I demanded, pointing to it.

"It is a packet," replied one of the attendants, "which the Lady Leonora's tire-woman brought here, just as her mistress was going down to the chapel, with orders to lay it on your table."

Without taking further notice, I bade them proceed in their task; and, when it was concluded, and they were gone, I took out the packet and opened it. Within the first cover was another, on which was written, in Leonora's hand:—

"My beloved Henry,—I have no right to keep the enclosed; and, unwilling to inflict pain, either on your father or mother, I send it to you,

"From your own LEONORA."

With a quick hand I tore the cover open; and I stood like one turned into stone. It was the picture of my brother! That sight dashed the cup of happiness from my lip. As I gazed on it, every thought that I had shut out, every memory that I had crushed, every feeling against which I had struggled successfully, rushed upon me at once, and, seizing upon heart and brain, overpowered every other emotion, blotted out joy beneath the dark and terrible stream of remorse, and cast me down at once from the fancied triumph which I had acquired over the demon into whose power I had cast myself. There it was before my eyes: his countenance, as I had so often seen it in life, gazing full upon me, with a look that would have been stern had it not been for a smile upon the lips, in which the artist had but too well caught the scornful, gibing expression, which was but too natural to that face. There it was, as I had seen it when last we met: so like—so fearfully like—that, with a power I could not

resist, it still attracted my eyes; and I gazed on it with horror, and remorse, and dread, till it almost drove me to madness. The features seemed to lose their form; spots of blood seemed to dabble the brow; the eyes rolled with the fearful distortion of a death of agony; and over-excited imagination changed, in a moment, my brother's effigy, as given by some skilful Italian painter, into the fearful and ghastly countenance which I had beheld lying beneath the rocks over which my hand had driven him. I tried to reason with myself; I made one wild struggle to recall the power which I had before acquired over my own mind: but it was in vain,—all in vain! Remorse had me now in his fell, unyielding grasp; and I gazed at the picture, with a thousand dreadful images surrounding it on every side, till I felt that a moment longer would drive me utterly insane; and then, dashing it furiously down upon the ground, so that it broke into a thousand pieces, I darted along the corridor, as if I would have fled from all that pursued me, and entered the chamber of Leonora.

It was in vain—all in vain, that I hoped for refuge there from the fiends that had me in their power. The dreadful passing of that night is beyond my capability to tell: I must not pause upon it. I will not attempt to shew how remorse turned love to agony: suffice it to say, that never did I lay down my head on the same pillow with my bright, my beautiful, my beloved bride—no, not for a moment,—without seeing the ghastly countenance of my brother, as he had lain before me, convulsed with the agony of death, interposing between her and me, and wringing my whole heart and soul with misery indescribable!

* * * * *

She withered slowly. It was like the fading away of one of those flowers I had loved in my childhood—gradual, yet

perceptible : not blasted at once, like a blossom broken from the bough, or crushed down by the heedless foot ; but calmly, gently,—as the leaf fades under the ceaseless, even march of time. How often have I marked, upon the green woods and forest-covered hills, the brown shadows of autumn creep on, day by day ; so gradually, so gently deepening the tints, and stealing the fresh hues of summer, that, from one hour to another, the eye can detect no change in the green children of the spring : and yet, each moment adds something to their decay—each day brings them nearer to the fall ! Thus faded my beloved : and, oh ! as I watched the rosy tints of health vanish from that soft cheek ; as the lip became paler, and the bright eye lost its light ; and I saw, and knew, and felt that I was the cause of all,—how deep, how terrible, how envenomed, did the barbed arrow of remorse prove itself, as it rankled in my heart, and sent the poison with which it was loaded through all the sweetest streams of life ! It was in vain that I, whose own bosom knew no balm, whose own griefs could receive no consolation, strove, by wild fits, to soothe or to console Leonora. The cause, the dreadful cause, could not be told ; no explanation could be given of all that must have seemed strange, and wild, and wayward in my conduct. Loving her with the most passionate earnestness, how often must she have thought that I loved her not ! How often must she have thought me mad, or base, or cruel ! The eyes of my father and my mother were upon us also ; and that but served to make the state both of Leonora and myself more terrible : for we both saw that they watched us,—we both saw that they were uneasy—we both dreaded questions to which neither could reply.

At length, as if to relieve me, the tide of war rolled near the place of our dwelling. The princes and nobles of the land were called to arms to support the authority of our

imperial lord. A general rendezvous for our feudal troops was appointed at Heilbron; and a general council of the nobles of the upper circles was summoned to meet at the same place. My father made ready in haste to answer the call, and I gladly prepared to accompany him. Two thousand men were enrolled under our banners, and no troops in Germany were better equipped to take the field; but, three days before we were to begin our march, my father was taken ill, and, all his authority being deputed to me, I led his troops forth to join the imperial army, and prepared to represent his opinions in the Diet at Heilbron. I was still in my early youth; but strong and terrible passions had rendered my heart old before its time, and had given to my mind that decided energy which is generally the result of age and experience. On every subject but the one dreadful one of my own fate, I could think clearly, rapidly, distinctly. In fact, the state in which I had placed myself rendered me unlike the rest of men. Dwelling in the fearful tabernacle of my own bosom, I looked forth upon, and mingled with the actions of, the world as if I belonged not to it. I saw and judged with the calm perception of a spectator, and I had withal the consciousness that this was an advantage; joined to the proud knowledge of original powers, at least equal to those of the men with whom I was about to act, and stores of acquired knowledge which none of them possessed. In this state of mind I proceeded to the Diet, and took my place among the rest with no feeling of awe, or hesitation, or embarrassment. There were many persons spoke—persons of much experience and of high esteem; and great was the foolishness which they often clothed in solemn language, and the idle vanities or selfish interests which they dressed up in the garments of patriotism, virtue, and religion. My respect for great assemblies of men was not increased by frequenting them; and I had none of those zealous feelings

which blind the eyes of many to the folly of their leaders. I had no enthusiasms; the hand of Fate had mowed them down like flowers before the scythe. Unhappy is the man in this world who has none of such bright weaknesses! but he is all the more likely to command and rule: and so I found it in my own case. The second day of the assembly, when I was tired of hearing foolish speeches, and every one else seemed convinced, or weary like myself, I rose: and, in the cold and cutting tone most likely to create a multitude of enemies, I exposed the folly of the proceedings which had been advocated so zealously; I detected the manifold errors of all the statements that had been made; and I pointed out, without condescending to express any diffidence of my own judgment, what was the real course that ought to be pursued. In an instant, there was the clamour of a thousand tongues against me: every venerable dotard, who judged that years and wisdom must be synonymous; every self-sufficient counsellor, who had arrayed himself for years in stated forms, and fancied that prudence consisted in following ever one beaten track,—all wagged the loud tongue at the presumptuous youth who had dared to assail the opinions of men of such reverence and good repute.

There was one, however, in the assembly—and he the man of most importance in it, being no other than the representative of the Emperor—who judged of me differently. He was keen and astute; the scion of a high Italian house, naturalised in Germany, and bringing all the subtlety of his original race to aid a cold, a calculating, and a prudent master. He speedily quelled the clamour; but he took no notice of me at the time. At night, however, he sent for me; and, after a long and eager conference, he adopted many of my opinions: though, from political deference to my opponents, he followed many of their plans in regard to

matters that were more ostensible than real. Action, however, soon became necessary : the troops of the enemy threatened the safety of the whole empire, and we hastened to oppose his further progress, under one of the most celebrated generals of the age. The two armies encountered in a very narrow field ; and, by the kind arrangements of some of those whom I had rendered inimical to me by opposing their schemes, I was placed in the position of the greatest difficulty and danger, where I was likely to be cut off, with the troops I commanded, from the main body of the army. But I looked upon these machinations with scorn ; and, feeling a degree of relief in the strife, not only with the enemy, but with pretended friends, I prepared to turn their schemes to my own advantage, and, by some brilliant attempt, to put their malice to shame. A narrow stream, between deep banks, lay between my troops and the left wing of the army, and I was thus left, cut off from all support, almost at the mercy of the enemy. A battle was to be expected the next day ; and, during the whole evening, I employed myself in examining the ground. At a spot lower down the stream, towards the enemy's position, the high bank sank away ; but the river was still so deep as to be impassable, except by a bridge, which was in the hands of our adversaries below. A number of large masses of rock, however, had fallen down from the hills round about, and encumbered the bank of the stream ; and with these, during the night, I contrived, by employing a number of men, to turn the course of the little river, and spread it over the low ground, leaving its original channel nearly dry. The water between the higher banks, was, it is true, rendered deeper by the dam I had constructed ; but I had calculated upon events which took place, and waited impatiently for the morning. At daybreak the enemy advanced to attack us ; and, while their principal

force marched straight up to the main body of the imperial army, slightly bending their right to cut me off entirely from our left, a considerable body of cavalry approached towards me in front; whilst spear-heads were also to be seen coming up through a ravine upon my left. At this moment, our own general perceived the fault into which he had been led by the counsel of my enemies; and a messenger came spurring over by a bridge nearly three miles in the rear, bidding me retreat by the same road and rejoin our main force. The messenger was, himself, a soldier of much distinction; and, pointing out to him the situation of the enemy, I said,—“Go back to the general, and tell him that it is, as you see, too late. I cannot retreat without being cut to pieces: but I can fight where I am; and, foreseeing this event, I have already prepared to do him good service.”

“I see clearly, Sir Count,” replied the messenger, “that you must act upon a separate plan; what do you intend to do?”

“Cut through yon body of the enemy in front,” I replied; “cross the bed of the stream where I have dammed it up during the night, in the low grounds below; and then take their right wing in flank while they are contending with our army in the front!”

“If you perform that,” replied the messenger, “you win us the victory; and I go to tell the general, in order that he may take advantage of your efforts.” Thus saying, he set spurs to his horse, and I paused, watching the further progress of the enemy, who came gallantly on, fancying that they had me in a net.

At length, I saw that the right wing of the force on the other side of the stream was engaged with the main body of our own army. The corps in front was preparing to attack me, judging that I would remain upon the defensive: but, as

I had previously arranged, I gave the word to charge ; and, in a moment, the whole body of troops which I had brought into the field were hurled against the enemy, sweeping down the hill with the impetuosity of an avalanche. In the fiery impetuosity of that moment ; in the eager exertion of every faculty, both of body and mind ; in the hand-to-hand fight with the men-at-arms who opposed me in my course ; in the rapid and anxious watching of the proceedings of others, while I was myself engaged in deadly strife,—I found the first moments of peace of mind ; I tasted the first drops of the cup of joy that I had known since the awful night of my marriage. The troops that I commanded were the same veteran soldiers that my father and brother had led into Italy : we had possessed the advantage of the ground, and nothing could withstand the charge with which we poured upon the enemy. All went down before us. The adverse corps was driven down, making a gallant, but vain resistance, to the spot where I had dammed up the river : and there, making a second extraordinary effort, I succeeded in breaking and totally dispersing their squadrons : and then, crossing the bed of the stream, I led my gallant bands up the other bank, and poured the same fiery charge upon the flank of the enemy who were contending with the imperial army. That charge was decisive : the fortunes of the day had gone pretty equally till we came up, but the balance was turned in a moment ; and I was looking round to see how I could best improve the advantage I had gained, when I found myself opposed by a young officer, with a small body of chosen troops, who, hemmed in between my bands and the steep bank of the river, fought with the fury of desperation. I called to him to surrender ; but, instead of doing so, he spurred on his horse against me, and aimed a blow at my head : I parried it, and drove him back ; he saw not that he

was upon the verge of the precipice, and, in trying to bring his horse round again upon me, the earth and stones gave way beneath the charger's feet, and, with a loud cry and a wild neigh, horse and man plunged over and disappeared.

The image which that sight recalled ; the picture that it suddenly raised up ; the dark memories that came rushing fiercely upon me, roused from their momentary sleep by that brief struggle, were more than human reason could bear. The wound in my heart was torn open afresh, my brain again seemed all on fire ; I forgot the lapse of time and the change of circumstances—the few great, and the many minor events which had taken place between. I felt as if I were again standing on the edge of the rocks over which I had hurled my brother. I felt as if the deed were fresh upon my hand—the blood newly spilt and reeking up to heaven—the mangled corpse lying at the foot of the bank below me, and the thunder-voice of God sounding in the ear of my spirit, and demanding, “Where is thy brother Abel?” I sprang from my horse ; I approached the edge of the bank, and gazed down below. There were they lying, horse and man together ! It was too much : I could bear no more ; and casting myself upon the turf, I gave vent to all the bitterness of my spirit. My own attendants, and the leaders of my bands, crowded round me—surprised, as they well might be, at such a scene. But I forgot everything. The memory, the consciousness of all but one dreadful deed, was blotted out for the time, and nothing but deep groans, and short and bitter imprecations, escaped from my bosom. At that moment came up, at full speed, a messenger from the general, both to give me thanks, couched in the brief but striking terms of a noble and commanding spirit, and to give me directions to press the enemy fiercely on the flank, while they were retreating, in order to render their defeat total and decisive.

He was brought to where I lay, and spoke to me with some surprise ; but his words fell upon a deaf and stony ear, or, at least, upon one between which and the reasonable spirit all the fine corridors of nature were stopped up. I heeded not, I answered not. The dreadful image was again before me—the terrible voice was again ringing in my ears—the iron hand of remorse was stretched out to snatch the cup of glory from my lip ; and, although, had the day ended with me as it began, immortal honour and a bright career in arms would have been mine without a doubt, the sun of my fame went down with a cloud upon it, which I felt I should never again have the energy to remove.

The general, in making his report of what had occurred, commented strongly and severely upon the strange contrast afforded by my conduct in the beginning and in the close of the day ; the gallantry, the daring, the skill, the activity of my first proceedings ; and the want of obedience, of energy, or of resolution, which I had displayed at last. My race was too powerful, however, to be offended by the imperial court ; and the minister, to withdraw me from the army, where he saw that I could no longer act efficiently under a commander who had expressed so much discontent at my proceedings, called me to Vienna ; speaking in high terms of the judgment and skill I had displayed in the plans I had proposed in the Diet at Heilbron.

Ere I set out, I received a letter from Leonora, breathing love from every line and every word, like the sweet perfume from a bed of flowers. It brought some balm to my soul ; and I was mad enough even to hope that, when I returned, after a temporary absence, the fatal image which had blasted all my happiness might no more pursue me to the blessed shelter of her beloved arms. As I journeyed towards Vienna, too, I exerted the powers of my own mind upon myself ; and

I again subdued the agony of my spirit—I again taught the vulture within me to prey upon me secretly.

I was received with distinction, treated with high honour ; and, either as a trial of my real abilities, or as a pretence of shewing me favour, my advice was demanded upon some point of small importance, concerning the policy of those minor states amidst which our own territories were situated. My advice was given boldly, though quite of a different character from what had been expected. It seemed to please as well as to surprise ; it was followed, and proved eminently successful. I was again and again appealed to : whatever I counselled opportunity favoured, and fortune crowned. It seemed as if Fate took a pleasure in leading me on to all great things, and then snatching them from my grasp. Thus, during the nine months that I passed at Vienna, nothing seemed to fail in which I had any share ; and the minister shewed his intention of binding me to himself, and to the Emperor, as one whose fortune, or whose skill, was sufficient to ensure them success.

It was winter night, towards one o'clock, after a day of great mental fatigue, that I sat with the Emperor and his minister in the cabinet of the monarch. The safety of the empire, the prosperity of all the imperial schemes, were at that time threatened by the Elector Henry of —, a man of immense talent, of extraordinary penetration, indefatigable activity, but of no principle, moral or religious. We met to determine what course was to be pursued, in order to stop him in his career ; and many a dark, vague hint had hung upon the minister's lip, as to the plan which he thought might be most successful.

We sat by the light of the lamp that had grown dim over our consultations, and gazed in each other's faces as if each were afraid to speak the thoughts that were busy in his heart.

At length the minister declared that the life of one man was, of course, never to be put in competition with the safety of a whole people; and he wished, he said, that the *vehme gericht* had not lately fallen into disuse. Having brought himself to come so near the subject as that, there was no difficulty in going on, the Emperor said that he surely had a right, in case of need, to do justice upon one of his own vassals; and if, by successful rebellion, that vassal had rendered it impossible for public justice to be done, he saw no reason why the same should not be effected by private means.

"It would be no difficult matter," rejoined the minister, "to free ourselves from him by a somewhat stronger cup than usual, in one of those revels whereof he is so fond."

"His cup-bearer is, doubtless, well tutored!" replied the monarch. "But would it not be an easy thing," he continued, addressing me with a smile,—“would it not be an easy thing, when he is riding along upon the banks of some deep stream, or by the side of some high precipice, to plunge him over? Such things have been done before now; and a fall of two or three hundred feet leaves but a mangled and a mutilated thing, without a tongue to tell whose was the hand that did it.”

His words were like red-hot iron thrust into my brain. I rose—I gasped for breath. I gazed with the fury of madness in the face of the speaker; and, springing towards him, I might have torn him to pieces, had not the corporeal frame sunk under the tremendous agony of that dreadful moment, and I fell prostrate at the Emperor's feet.

When I recovered my senses I found myself in my own apartments, but with my arms confined, and every means of injuring myself or others removed far out of my reach. It was long before I could persuade the attendants that I had become sane again; and, for several days, all who surrounded

me continued to treat me as a madman, although all my words and actions were perfectly reasonable. At length, however, they became convinced that I had recovered, but an intimation was given me that I should do well to retire from Vienna ; and I accordingly journeyed back by slow stages towards my own home. My mind, indeed, was in a calmer state than it had known for many months ; and, when I could take my thoughts from the one dreadful memory, there was a soft and soothing influence in the idea of once more seeing Leonora, of resting my aching head upon her bosom, and of tasting one moment of peace and enjoyment in the first dear embrace at my return.

As I came nearer, something like hope rose up within me. I pictured her sweet lips smiling my welcome ; I pictured her beautiful eyes looking sunshine on my arrival ; I listened in anticipation to the musical tones of her beloved voice ; and I heard the endearing words of unchangeable love poured forth from that pure and guileless heart on her long-absent husband's return. I hurried the last day's journey, and about four in the evening of a bright summer's day I entered the court-yard of the castle.

Everything was there as usual. The warder was sitting beneath the barbican, and looking listlessly forth ; the soldiers on the battlements were leaning on their pikes, and gazing on a bright warm scene of river and woodland ; the horse-boys were carrying water across towards the stables ; and the armourer was sitting in the shade—polishing, with idle industry, a casque that was bright enough without his labour. Everything appeared as I had seen it each day for twenty years ; and yet my heart sank as I rode in, and, with a slow motion, oh, how unlike the vaulting leap of youth and happiness ! dismounted from my horse, and walked up the steps into the great hall.

It might be that my father had not come forth to meet me—that my mother had not looked out from her window in the keep, which caused that sudden sinking of my heart. But, when I entered the hall, there was a look of anxiety and care in the eyes of the attendants who were congregated there, which increased my apprehension. As all had known of my approach, there was nothing like surprise on the countenance of any one ; but there was a grave look of fixed anxiety which distressed and alarmed me.

“Where is your lady?” I demanded of one of the attendants ; “is she well?”

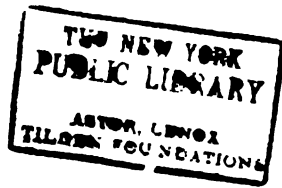
“Quite well, sir,” replied the man ; “she is in the chamber of the Lady Leonora.”

I had referred to Leonora when I spoke, but the man had misunderstood me, and I did not choose to ask any further questions. I sprang on eagerly to Leonora’s apartments. I came to the chamber in which she usually sat : she was not there, and I went on to her bed-room. From within came the murmur of several persons talking ; and, opening the door, I entered at once. The first object my eyes fell upon was the form of my mother, sitting by the bedside, while my father stood at the foot gazing in. The sound of my step made him turn a little aside, and then I heard the voice of Leonora, as her eye first lighted upon me.

“It is—it is !” she cried. “I knew I should see him again before I died ! Oh, Henry !—oh, my beloved, you are come to close poor Leonora’s eyes !”

I darted forward, and clasped in my arms the shadow, the mere shadow, of my beautiful, my beloved bride ; and tears rushed forth—hot, agonising tears—as I saw the state to which she was reduced ; and my heart smote me, crying aloud, “Thou hast done this thing also !”

They left me alone with her. I could hardly speak for





Woodcut.

215.

THE MAN WHO WAS BORN IN THE YEAR OF THE GREAT FLOOD.

THE MAN WHO WAS BORN IN THE YEAR OF THE GREAT FLOOD.

sobs. I could not, I would not, relinquish the embrace in which I held her ; I could only take my lips from her to ask, "What—what has done this?"

She put me gently back a little with her hand, gazed upon the passionate agony of my countenance, and, with a look of joy, beautiful, yet terrible, exclaimed, "Then you do—you do love me, Henry! I die happy—I bless you with my latest breath!"

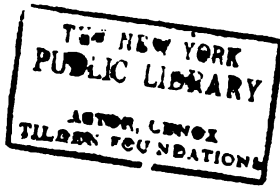
I could bear no more. The dark prisoner in my breast, in that tremendous struggle, broke the chain of silence, and, sinking on my knees beside her, I poured forth my whole heart. I told her all—all—everything; and, for her answer, she cast her arms around my neck and wept.

"I would fain live," she said, after a long silence,—
"I would fain live to comfort thee, my dear, my beloved husband. But it is in vain; the grasp that is never relaxed is upon me, and I must go. Yet hear me, Henry. God has told us that there is pardon for all!—We shall meet yet again! But that we may do so—and, oh! did I think we should not, the grave would grow terrible indeed—but that we may meet again, promise me to seek comfort where comfort only can be found!—There was a holy man dwelt in a convent hard by my father's house," she continued, "who, in my sorrow for two parents' loss, gave me consolation with such powerful zeal, that I would fain send thee unto him for balm to thy wounded heart. Oh! go to him, my Henry; and, if you love Leonora, and would meet her again in happier worlds than this, promise me to tell him all, and to follow his counsel even unto the grave."

I did promise, and I fulfilled my word. She left me for the heaven she came from, and I laid bare my heart before the good man she spoke of. He told me, and he told me true, that I should never more know peace on

earth ; but that, if I suffered with patience, God would send me comfort ere He took me hence.

Years have passed away, and youth, and health ; and that holy man has been laid in the ground near half a century. The cell that he inhabited I inhabit now ; and I wait in penitence, in prayer, and in remorse, the coming of the inevitable hour.





J. P. J. J. J.

W. M. M.

Laura

JEALOUSY.

THE woods have been cut down, the fields are shadeless and verdureless, the Mugnone scarcely covers the pebbles in his bed ; and from Fiesole to Florence not a tree is to be met with, except here and there a tall solitary cypress rising in the gardens of some villa, and the dusty olive and gnarled fig-tree in the fields along the road. The time once was, however, when those gigantic Apennines, which now rise bare and harsh upon the lustrous sky of Italy, were clothed thickly, at that point where they sweep round the Tuscan capital, with every variety of tree and shrub which can be produced by a climate prolific of vegetable life. In those days, too, the shelter afforded by the wide and verdant forests, fostered a thousand streams in the valleys, and a rich and beautiful turf carpeted the margins of the rivers. The Mugnone then poured on a full and sparkling river ; and just beneath the spot which will be immortal, as the abode of Landor, stretched out the lake, immortal, as the dreaming-place of Boccacio. Lovely, indeed, was Italy in those days, when, with all its bold and all its sweet features in their fresh beauty, it lay beneath that splendid heaven which still hangs, unchanged in its never-fading loveliness, above a land where all else tells a melancholy story of decay.

On the slope of the Apennine, where, turning away from the bright valley of the Arno, a long lateral dell winds far

up amidst the mountains, stood, in those times of which I speak, a dwelling-place, at the foot of whose walls, now in the grey livery of the ruin, I have often gathered the wild myrtle and the rich golden broom. It was built upon the close of the sixteenth century, when the old castello had given place, throughout the greater part of Italy, to the gay villa and the light dreams of Palladio ; but at a time, nevertheless, when the people throughout the whole land retained many of the qualities which had been nourished under barbarism and civil strife. They were the children of the tempest-cloud ; and mingled darkness and fire were the attributes of the race. The villa of which I speak united the castellated architecture of a former period with many of the lighter embellishments of a later age ; and while, viewed from the hill behind, it presented battlements, and towers, and long extended walls, with scarcely a window to admit the light, on the side that looked down the valley appeared porticoes, and colonnades, and fountains, and statues, and terraced gardens, with every object by which art strives to please the eye and excite the imagination. It was a fairy scene, and bright ; and spread out before those porches and gardens, lay a wide valley thronged with old chestnut-trees, broken with meadows and with dells, full of living streams and rich verdure, the resort of the wild free bird, and sunshine, and song. ·

Such is the picture of it as given, both by the pen of one who long inhabited that dwelling, and by the pencil of a skilful artist, the bright productions of whose hand still hang within the only habitable room which the villa now contains.

In that room, that solitary room, is preserved, with fond and affectionate care, by the last poor descendant of that once wealthy and noble house, a little treasure of memorials touching the past days, when the race from which he springs

was in the height of splendour. And often, as I have sat with him conversing in the short purple twilight of a dreamy Italian evening, he has gone back to the records of his house, sometimes making my heart thrill, and sometimes glow, and sometimes causing the blood to curdle in my veins, as he has told me the tales of passion, and sorrow and crime which none but such a land and such a people can produce ; tales where the wild and glowing imagination, peculiar to the country of poetry and song, is displayed, alternately the master and the slave of the wild and stormy passions imprisoned in the same fiery bosoms with itself.

In him such passions have long been asleep ; and the voice of a calm and broken spirit, mellowed and softened by that deep sense of religion enjoined by his profession—for he is an ecclesiastic—gave a solemn, nay, a sublime tone to the fierce and tempestuous pictures he displayed, by the strong strange contrast between the narrator and the history. I hung upon his words with mingled feelings of pity and regret and awe ; and, seeing the effect which such tales produced upon me, he one night placed in my hands a small picture representing one of the loveliest creatures I had ever beheld, but with a strange difference between the expression and the features, the latter seemingly formed to beam with nothing but brightness, gaiety, light, and love ; the former conveying at once to the heart the same feelings that we experience when we see a thunderstorm rolling its masses over the bright summer sky. So exquisitely, however, has the painter contrived to make that cloud of stormy passion harmonise with those angelic features, that it was long before I could discover in what the singularity of the picture consisted ; and I gazed upon it as if fascinated, while my fancy ran on, and, whether reason would or not, shadowed forth a history to suit that fair but dangerous countenance.

"What think you of, my son?" demanded the good canon, at length; "you seem strangely moved by that picture?"

I told him what was in my thoughts; and he replied, "You are partly right: but you shall read her story written by her own hand;" and, opening one of the drawers of a cabinet in which he kept all his little treasures, he drew forth a small bundle of papers, so faded by the effect of time that the pale brown ink was scarcely to be traced. Putting it in my hand, he said, "There, read it! It will cost you some trouble; but, perhaps, you may find it worth your pains. Return it to me when you have done, for I would not lose it for half the Grand Duchy."

I was turning hastily away to bear it to the Tre Maschere, at which I then lodged, but he gently took hold of my arm, saying, "Remark yonder old grey walls!" and he pointed to a ruined house down in the very lowest part of the valley. "It is the scene of a tragedy," he added, and then let me go. I hastened home as fast as I could, and, by the light of one of those beautiful Tuscan lamps which still bear so strongly the traces of the classical age, I read the following history, which I give exactly as I found it.

THE HISTORY.

"I am an only child. Oh, that sad, that dangerous state! A helpless infant on the brink of a precipice is in safety, compared to an only child.

"Noble, and great, and good, my father had few or none of the faults of our country and our time; he could love with truth and with devotion; he could pardon with generosity and kindness; he could be a friend to those whom it was his

interest to destroy ; he was a monitor to his prince, and a lover to his wife. Not that he was without passions ; far, far from it : not that he reasoned coldly and calculated minutely on all the ordinary actions of life. But there was within his bosom a fund of noble and of generous feeling powerful enough to control and overcome the fiery impulse of an ardent spirit. Through life he never committed but one crime ; and that crime was committed at the instigation of his daughter. His daughter's hand shall do him justice, and shall trace these lines to purify his name, though the pen that writes them be dipped in her own heart's blood.

“ I am an only child ; and bright and beautiful were the days of my childhood. Care was a vision that came not near my couch, sorrow an enemy which ventured not into our dwelling-place ; sport and pastime lighted my footsteps forward through the paths of youth ; hope went on before and cleared away every obstacle ; and love followed after and smiled upon me as I went.

“ Why should I dwell upon those bright days of infancy ? why should I remember the joys of early youth ? All years might have been the same to me, all time might have beheld my happiness ; girlhood might have been strewed with the flowers of expectation, and womanhood might have been garlanded with the flowers of love ; maternity might have been decked with gifts and promises ; age might have been crowned with blessings, hope, and memory—had I myself so willed it. Yet I was neither a capricious nor a wilful child. I could love to adoration : I loved my mother beyond the power of feeble words to tell ; and her dark eyes, gazing upon me with intense affection, will never depart out of my soul. I loved my father too, I loved his noble qualities and mighty deeds ; I loved him, I adored him, as if my heart would have burst when I strove to contain the vast and overpower-

ing affection which the thought of all his kindness, and his love and nobleness, caused to expand within me.

“ But I was their only child ; they loved me deeply, intensely, and alone. They taught me, without lesson, without lecture, by the very daily commune of that individual, undivided love, that to be loved alone was the glory, and the brightness, the food, the spirit of existence—that to be loved alone was all that made life valuable—that to be loved alone was the sunshine, the warmth, the light, the vivifying principle of being. Oh, glorious covetousness ! oh, mighty and majestic selfishness ! even now, when I owe thee misery—misery, not alone perhaps of this world, but of the next—I own thy power, I acknowledge thy supremacy, I feel that to be loved alone is the aspiration of the grandest nature, the desire above our being, the quality of almightiness, the right of Godhead. It is a vast, it is a daring, it is an impious expectation ! and yet, from my infancy I nourished it : from my earliest years unknown, undiscovered, it reigned within my bosom.

“ I was an only child, and loved alone. In the eyes of those dear parents I was all and everything ; my mother smiled upon me from the morning till the night ; and my father, when he came back from the perils of war or the exhausting discussions of the cabinet, would catch me in his arms, and gaze upon me with a glance which told me how entirely, how thoroughly, how intensely, I was loved alone. In the festas for which our villa was celebrated, when the children of the neighbouring nobility poured in to enjoy the splendour of my father’s hospitality, often have I marked him, obliged to praise the comeliness or grace of some young daughter of an illustrious house, speak cold and faintly, while his eye glanced towards his own child ; and I have felt, that, while obliged by the rules of society to laud another, I—that I, of all the bright, and beautiful, and gay—that I was loved

alone ; that he saw not, that he felt not, that he knew not, one grace or beauty in any one around him, but in her who was dearest, brightest, most beautiful to the heart of his fatherly affection.

“Thus passed the hours till soft and dewy childhood advanced, amidst its plenteous sunshine and its scanty showers, towards the warm summer of maturity ; and still the same tale went on,—I was beloved beyond aught on earth, and, until eighteen summers had glowed in golden splendour over my head, I felt but one emotion, of deep and fathoming profundity, of wide-spreading and overshadowing power : it was the intense love of those who intensely loved me. There were many came and fluttered round, like insects over a flower ; but I felt like that flower whose vegetable beauty might attract them, but which, either unconscious of, or without sympathy for, the earnest pursuit it excited, remained calm, cold, and unmoved, while the gaudy butterflies waved their wings around it.

“It was in that eighteenth summer that my mother died ; she took away a portion of the love that had been centered in me, but she left that portion which remained concentrated, acuminate, undivided. She herself had parted my father’s love with me ; she herself had taken a share in that affection which I thirsted for undivided. She had, it is true, given me all her own in return ; the looks that rested on my father were second in affection to those which she cast upon me ; but still my father’s to my heart were the most valuable ; there was nothing weak or doubtful, or undignified, in that affection or its expression. In sacrificing all to his child, in loving nothing like her, I felt that he made a mighty sacrifice ; but he granted me love worthy of love in return, and oh, how truly, how intensely, I did love him !

“Once or twice he spoke to me of marriage, and of

loving another ; and he seemed to think that it was a duty, especially after my mother's death, to afford me by every means in his power the opportunity of forming new ties, to call my attention to new hopes. But it was all in vain : I fancied I could never love with the love of which he spoke ; I believed that I could never feel towards another aught so powerful, so intense, so absorbing, as that which I felt towards him : and the constant contemplation of his noble dignity, and his fiery energy, made me look upon all those who sought my love, as weak, insipid beings, worthy of little beyond contempt. Thus passed on the time : and, though I saw that he was anxious to see the child he loved united to some one who, in troublous times like these, might afford her protection if deprived of his supporting arm, yet I could never bring my mind to think of such an union with anything but abhorrence.

“The hour which bore my fate along with it was soon to come, however. There was a small villa and a small estate which lay in the valley, within sight of our dwelling-house ; the proprietor thereof had adhered to the interests of France, and, in the changing fortunes of those days, had sunk gradually lower and lower in point of wealth, both by those he opposed and by those he upheld. Let no man serve princes, unless he can make them fear him ; for he is sure to make enemies of their enemies without gaining one friend from amongst their friends. While the French party were depressed, he suffered and was persecuted ; when the French party rose, he was neglected and forgotten : and thus, down the precipitous hill of fortune, so difficult to climb and so easy to descend, his fate rolled on amain, till he was forced to offer for sale the last portion of his father's lands.

“We saw the spot, as I have said, from the windows of the villa ; and my father often declared that he would become

the purchaser, but other matters intervened. The poor man is easily forgotten, and the purchase was not completed ; when, one day, we were surprised to hear a rumour that the estate was sold. My father's cheek grew red, and he exclaimed, angrily, that he had not thought there was a man in Tuscany who would have dared to step between him and the purchase he was disposed to make. He sent down an attendant to inquire if the report were true ; the simple reply was, that the place was sold. My father was chafed, but his anger went no further, and it ceased entirely when we heard that the purchase had been made by a foreigner.

“ Some short time after—it was on a bright and beautiful summer's day, and we had ridden forth to fly our hawks over the mountains—we encountered a train of travellers on horseback. The one who rode first, and alone, was a noble-looking man, not yet reached the middle age, but past the first period of his youth. He might be three or four and thirty years of age ; and exposure to the sun and storm had embrowned his countenance, while here and there a grey hair mingled with the dark black curls that fell upon his shoulders. He was tall and stately ; and there was a stern gravity in his countenance, which spoke of much thought, if not of some care. He rode the horse that bore him, too—a fiery and powerful charger—with that ease and air of strength, which seemed to denote that the animal was but the creature of his will. In passing, he raised his hat as soon as he saw a woman was of the other party, and then turned his horse down the road that led towards the Villa Montaroni, which, I have said, had been lately sold.

“ Some carriages followed at a little distance behind ; and one of our attendants, fancying he should thereby gratify a curiosity which it was below my father's dignity to express, asked one of the drivers, as we passed, to whom they be-

longed. The man replied, 'To the Count de Morney, who had ridden on before : ' and when my father heard the name, he instantly recognised it as that of a celebrated officer in the service of the French king, a man famous alike for gallant daring and skilful generalship, and for that generous nobility of soul which raises and elevates every cause, and dignifies every action. With this knowledge, my father determined to seek the acquaintance of our new neighbour ; but, for some time, he sought it in vain. The count held no communion with any of the nobles round about. And it was quickly rumoured, that bitter disappointments, proceeding from the ingratitude of a king, and the jealousy of a favourite, had rendered him morose and misanthropical. We pressed our friendship upon no one. The matter passed by, and was forgotten ; so that the count might have lived amongst us as if he had not existed at all, had not, from day to day, some anecdote of his kindness and benevolence towards the peasantry reached our ear, showing that it was not man that he hated, but only, perhaps the great.

" I had ridden out in the autumn time, while my father was absent in Florence, accompanied by two of my women, and some grooms, both on horseback and on foot ; and, I know not well why, I had taken my way over the sloping hills which lie close by the Villa Montaroni. On the heights above there is a small shrine, with a fine picture of the Virgin, situated just where the woods sweep round from the higher parts of the mountain. I paused to look at the picture, and crossed myself. The attendants were a little way behind ; and, at that very moment, a wolf darted out from behind the shrine, and sprang at my horse's throat. The servants galloped up, and the beast let go its hold and fled ; but the horse, frightened and torn, became unmanageable, reared, plunged, and darted like lightning over the hill. The

attendants followed at full speed; but the sound of their horses' feet only increased the furious galloping of my own. He approached the brink of the precipice which hangs over the river: in vain I tried to stop him: in vain I strove to turn him from the direction which he was taking!—On, on he went, with the madness of terror; and, ere another minute had passed, my father's house would have been made desolate, when I saw some one, who had been lying reading under one of the trees, start up and cast himself in the way of the horse. It was the Count de Morney; and, in a moment, he had seized the animal by the bridle; but between him and the precipice there was the space of two short paces. The horse still plunged on; and, during a momentary struggle, the life and death of all hung in the balance. With the strength of a giant, however, he overcame the furious power of the wild animal, reined him back upon his haunches, and caught me fainting in his arms. The moment his hand was off the bridle, the horse sprang up again, and darted forward! Some days after, I had a frightful intimation of the fate which might have befallen myself, by beholding the noble beast lying crushed, at the foot of the precipice, with the ravens feeding on his pampered flesh!

“I was immediately carried into the Villa Montaroni; and, when I recovered my senses, I found the count gazing with eager interest upon me. Words were too weak to express my gratitude at the moment; and he smiled and shook his head when I attempted to thank him.

“‘I would have done the same,’ he said, ‘for the meanest boor in the land. Do you not think that I am well repaid in having done it for you?’

“I thought that smile on his grave, proud lip, the most beautiful thing I had ever yet beheld in life. It was like a gleam of sunshine passing over the awful face of some high

mountain; and I replied nothing: but I believe I gazed upon him somewhat intently, for he smiled again, and insisted upon my taking some wine, saying, that he saw I was not yet well. As soon as I expressed a wish to go, he caused one of his carriages to convey me home; and the news of the accident I had met with was instantly conveyed to my father. He hastened up from Florence the next morning as rapidly as possible; but, before he arrived, the count had come to inquire after my health, and had remained with me long in conversation.

“Never shall I forget that interview! never will that conversation pass from my memory. It was something new, and strange, and delightful. He who first, by accident, discovered wine, could not have been more surprised or delighted than I was, could not have been more in danger of becoming intoxicated with the full delicious draught. I shall remember it for ever. And yet it may be difficult to explain in what consisted the extraordinary charm that so captivated me. He flattered me not; he did not even agree with me in many of my opinions; he addressed me, not as those had addressed me who had come for the express purpose of pleasing and of winning; he talked not to me as to a child; he talked not to me as to a woman; he spoke, as one high mind might address another; as one powerful intellect, one noble heart, one rich, profuse imagination, might converse with its equal. He remained with me more than an hour, and he left me in a dream, bewildered, astonished, enchanted.

“When my father came, I cast myself upon his bosom, and wept; and he imagined that those tears proceeded from emotion at seeing him again, after so very nearly having been lost to him for ever: but there were many, many new, strange, thrilling feelings mingled with those that called the drops into my eyes; and the day passed over in reveries.

During a part of that day my father left me, to go and pay the tribute of thanks himself to the Count de Morney. He came back almost as much enchanted as his daughter.

“‘He is, indeed, a glorious and extraordinary being,’ he said; ‘and now that we have broken through his icy reserve, we must not lose such society. It is too rarely to be found upon the earth.’

“But he himself was now no longer inclined that we should lose it either. Oh, Henry! happy had it been for thee, hadst thou not suffered some girlish beauty to mislead thine understanding; happy had it been for thee, hadst thou not suffered some graces, and some wild and not ungenerous feelings, to lead thee to attribute to me virtues like thine own! Alas, alas! how little did I deserve that thou shouldst make me—me, all poor and unworthy,—the jewel of a heart like thine!

“He came again the following day: he came every day. For us, he shook off his reserve; for us, he changed the course of conduct on which he had determined; for us, he left his solitude; for us, he mingled with the world. I saw—and, oh! with what pride and joy did I see—that I was becoming unto him more than all others; that, at the sight of me, a lambent light, like that of dawn, rose up in his calm melancholy eye; that, at one word from my tongue, the proud resolute lip softened into a bland and radiant smile; that, in addressing me, the manly and eloquent voice would sometimes tremble, even with the energy of the heart which spoke! Oh, with what joy I saw that I was loved! And how did I love him in return? Can I describe it?—oh, never! I marked him as he moved, and every movement was grace; I listened to his words, and every sound was music; I leaned upon his arm, and the very touch was

joy ; I gazed into his eyes, and felt as if I looked into the gates of heaven !

“ Deep, intense, overpowering, were the sensations that came upon me every day ; and, I do believe, that had they been obliged to remain much longer unspoken, unrevealed, they would have destroyed me by their very intensity.— They did nearly destroy me ; for there came a time, long, long after he had fettered his heart to mine, and mine to his, by ties stronger than links of adamant, when he doubted, when he feared, when the newness of his feelings, of his situation, of his prospects, shook even the firm frame of his fixed and steadfast mind, and made him hesitate, and waver, and apprehend, and struggle—vainly struggle, like a lion in toils that had been cast around him in his sleep—to escape from his spirit’s thralldom in new and unwonted bonds. He remained away from me nearly six whole days ; and, oh ! who can tell the fiery torture of my heart during that long, long age of doubt, and suspense, and apprehension ! He, perhaps, knew not what he felt ; he, perhaps, knew not how deeply, how irretrievably, our spirits were bound to each other : but I knew it, and I felt it all. I felt that I was his, and he was mine ; and that whatever interposed between us, tore asunder the very bonds of life.

“ The first day of his absence, I watched for his coming every hour ; I schooled myself for my impatience ; I repeated, that it was the first time that he had thus absented himself ; I consoled myself with the thought that some accidental circumstance might well occur to keep him from my side. The second day, I feared and doubted. Could he be ill ? I asked myself ; injured by some sudden accident, unable to seek her whose society had worked so strange a change in all his habits ! In the evening, my father went down to his

dwelling ; but he found that the count had gone out to ride amongst the mountains ; and I lay down, not to rest, but to drench my pillow with my tears. The third day I passed in dark and bitter reveries. I hated myself, to think that I had ever been moved to quit the calm indifference of my early years : and, as my father gazed upon me, and as I saw in the sorrowful glance of his eyes, that—although the struggling passions of my bosom strove one with the other in silence and in darkness—he marked the warfare within, and understood the cause of strife, I was angry, I was enraged, that any eye should look upon the bitterness of my heart, and I experienced feelings towards that beloved parent which had never before entered into my breast.

“ The fourth and fifth days I was more calm ; but it was the calmness of despair ! Anger had passed away ; indignation had given place to tenderness. ‘ He has seen much of the world,’ I thought ; ‘ he has mingled with the gay, and the light, and the vicious, and the idle ; and his noble mind, like the diamond, has abhorred the contaminating breath that would dim its excellent lustre. He has resolved never to sully his heart with the love of any of the false and fickle beings of the world ; and he has fled me, lest he should feel those feelings which he can but too deeply teach.’ Again I wept away the night : and, on the sixth morning, I arose resigned, indeed, but with the resignation of despair ; with the resignation which strengthens not, but weakens ; with the resolution to bear all that life can bring, but which looks to, longs for, hastens the approach of death.

“ After the morning meal my father rode forth, and I saw him take the high road towards the Villa Montaroni. I knew not why he went, but I wished he had not gone ; and as, sitting under the portico, I watched the plumes of his hat, and the gay colours of his attendants glancing in and out

through the grey olive trees, I longed to call him back, and say, that I felt all was over, and that now my mind was made up. At that moment my ear caught the galloping of horses; my father was riding slowly, and the sound came not from that quarter. I turned my head, but the olive and fig trees on the other side concealed one of the narrow country roads, that wound through the forest from the valley below. I asked myself, why my heart should beat so vehemently at such an ordinary sound? but yet it did beat, so as to take away my breath, and my eyes remained fixed upon a spot where the white line of the low garden-wall glistened through the trees and shrubs upon the terrace below.

“The next minute, the sound of horses’ feet ceased entirely, something darkened the light glistening of the garden-wall, a figure was seen moving through the trees, and I leaned against the column, for fear I should fall. He came onwards towards the great saloon, in which I usually sat during the morning; but, as he mounted the steps from the terrace to the portico, his eye fell upon me, and he sprang forward. When within two steps of me, he paused suddenly with a look of surprise and grief, exclaiming, ‘Laura! you are pale, you are ill! God of heaven! what has changed you so?’ and I knew that he loved me! I answered not, for I could not answer; I moved not, for I dared not move. In a moment he was at my feet, and exclaimed, ‘Tell me, tell me, is it possible that I have a share in this?’

“Still I answered not, and yet, some way, I must have answered; for his arms were round me in an instant, and my face was buried, blushing, in his bosom. The moment of ecstasy which I then felt, pressed to the heart of him I loved, panting with the certainty of being beloved in return,—that moment of ecstasy, of wild, tumultuous, thoughtless, passionate joy, was worth all existence—was worth—oh! it

was worth eternity itself ! If so to feel, if so to thrill with delight that shook the very fabric of my being, can only be purchased by years of misery, such as I have since felt, still, still that one moment, that inestimable jewel of deep feeling, is worth the whole dross of life, and not too dearly bought by all the bitterest pangs that mortal frame can undergo.

“ What followed next I hardly know ; consciousness was lost ; though, whether it was the turbulence of many joys, drowning, in their clamour for attention, all distinct thought ; or whether it was that the sensation of happiness was too strong and overpowering for a frail weak frame like this to endure for more than a moment, I can hardly tell ; but the next instant, the passing of which I remember, found me no longer in the portico, but in the great saloon, to which his arms had borne me ; he was bathing my temples with the essences that stood near ; but he had called no one to his aid ; and, when he saw that I could listen, he kneeled eagerly at my feet, and yet held his arms round me, as if come to plead humbly, but yet resolved to conquer.

“ ‘ Laura ! ’ he said, ‘ Laura ! beautiful and beloved ! you have been ill ; I see you have been both ill and grieved. And, oh ! if I could hope—nay, I do hope—that that illness, that that grief, has sprung from my absence, how joy would triumph over sorrow ! how grief, that thou hast suffered, would, in the selfishness of man’s nature, yield to the rapture of knowing that I, that I, unworthy as I am, have the power to cause thee sorrow, and to create thy happiness ! ’

“ I would have answered ; and, perhaps, there is something so strong, either in woman’s nature or her education, that I might have given a woman’s answer ; but he went on, and took from me all power of affecting anger.

“ ‘ Hear, my Laura, ’ he said, ‘ hear, my beloved ! Thou

mayest have thought that I have absented myself from thee—from thee whose presence has become the sunshine of my life—because I entertained one vulgar fear, or doubt, or suspicion, that thou wert, as many another woman is, a gaudy manufactured butterfly, set flying in its splendour by the mechanical wheels of custom, to flutter on a certain time in an allotted course, and then sink down into a cold, feelingless, motionless thing, only to be wound up to new exertion by the key of some new passion. Thou mayest have thought that, if I judged not thus, I suspected that it might be so; and that I strove to conquer the feelings which attracted me, spite of my better sense. If so, thou didst me wrong. I know thee better, Laura. Fair and beautiful as is this hand, bright and liquid as are those eyes, this hand were valueless in my sight, or but as a piece of sculptured marble; those eyes were speechless to my heart, or eloquent but as the painted canvass, fresh from some skilful limner's brush, did not this hand convey a heart beyond, in value and in brightness, the overprized mines of either India—did not those eyes afford a pledge of feelings worthier, nobler, than a conqueror's crown. Laura, during the last six terrible days, I have fled from thee, I have avoided thee, and, in solitude and in thought, I have striven to master myself—I have striven to master the love more powerful than myself; but it has been no doubt of thee that caused the effort; it was no fear of what thou mightest prove. The doubt was of myself! I could not believe that I was worthy of such love as thine. The fear was of my own fate! I could not hope that fortune had in store for me such a treasure as the heart that speaks out there. Laura, Laura!' he added, pressing me closer to him, as he saw a smile, the first that had come across my agitated countenance, break forth at his tale of needless apprehensions, 'Laura, Laura! thou art mine! I see it in

those eyes, that never spoke aught but truth ; I see it on that lip, formed for love itself.'

" I replied not ; but he needed no reply. He saw—he felt that he was beloved ; and he went on : ' When I came hither from my native land, I had determined to shut myself from my kind, to imprison all my sympathies within my own bosom, to live but for myself ; or but to let those within the magic circle of my studied selfishness who could affect me only by compassion. Laura, I have been disappointed in bright expectations ; and I had determined never again to build up the unstable fabric of hope on the visionary foundation of human virtue : but I have now seen thee ; thou hast come upon me like the sun, scattering the dark shades of night ; thou hast given back light to my soul, hope to my heart, sunshine to my path, beauty and brightness to all around thee, and poured once more a vivifying principle into all those things which, before I beheld thee, were dead, cold, blank, and dark. Oh, Laura, Laura ! never take away from me again the light of thy love, for the night would be tenfold more obscure, profound, and wretched.'

" As he spoke on, as he spoke boldly his own ardent and passionate affection, mine gained courage from his ; my lips became untied by his eloquence ; I owned I loved him ; I let him see, I made him comprehend, how much. We sat together, linked in each other's arms, pouring forth the mutual feelings of our hearts by sudden fits, not interrupted, not exactly broken ; but like the course of a mountain stream, sometimes hurrying on an overpowering torrent, sometimes flowing smooth and calm, reflecting every bright thing around, sometimes sporting in sparkling playfulness with the pebbles of its bed. So flowed on our words of love ! At length, long ere we expected it, there came the sound of horses, and my father entered the saloon.

Henry rose, but he did not quit my hand ; clasping it still in his, he led me forward, and laid his left upon my father's arm. ' Lord Marquess,' he said, ' I ask you for a gift ; which, if you value it as I do, is more than if I asked you for a throne. Can you be the generous man to give it me ?—your daughter's hand ?'

" He spoke as in the tone of a prince, and I felt—oh, how I felt ! at that moment, that, in his lordly nature, he was greater than any prince on earth. My eyes were cast down, and my lips were silent ; but my father replied, ' Willingly will I give her to you, count ; but upon one condition : she shall be your wife, but she must not cease to be my daughter : without her I cannot live ; and you must not take her from my roof : you shall dwell here with her, and I shall gain a son.'

" ' Willingly, willingly, will I dwell where she dwells,' replied the count. ' I had, my lord, cast off the world, and foresworn society for life ; but she is now my world. She shall give me new life ; and, if the baseness of others blackened human nature to my eyes, her virtues and her generous love may well render all fair and beautiful again ! He then, with a proud smile, as if he spoke in deference to common forms, which, while he yielded to them he scorned, said some few words about his wealth and station, and that he brought to his alliance with the heiress of my father's house a fortune not unequal to her own.

" But my father cut him short. ' I know it all, count,' he said. ' One of my wise friends, hearing that we knew and prized you, took pains to investigate the items of your fortune, and sent me a long schedule of lands in Picardy, estates in Brie, castles and vineyards fair in Provence and Languedoc ; which useful memorandum I folded carefully up, and transmitted to the fire ; having but to tell you, count,

that, did you come to seek my daughter with nothing but your glory-brightened sword, your high virtues, and your noble name, I would welcome you as gladly as I do now, though you be the lord of many a fair and smiling land.'

* * * * *

"We were married; and for three short months, so short, that if all life had passed like them, it would have seemed but as a flash of lightning, bright, never to be forgotten, but gone as soon as seen,—for three short months I lived in one ecstatic dream of joy. I hung upon his looks, I fed upon his smiles. The beauty of all other things, of the statue, the picture, the face of nature itself, was forgotten, to gaze upon his graceful form, as it moved in majesty amongst my father's halls. The sound of his voice filled them with harmony, his eyes lighted them up, as if for a continual festival. Let not any one say, that, by nature, I was jealous. Oh, no! I have seen him, when surrounded by the bright and the lovely, bend over them with his proud smiling lip, and speak the words of graceful courtesy, without one pang, without one apprehension. I have seen beauty striving for his notice, and coquetry displaying all her arts, and have laughed in the haughty happiness of knowing him my own—in the calm, glad pride of feeling that his every thought, and wish, and emotion, were for me. Oh, no! I was not jealous by nature! I will not believe it! I do not think it. I hope it was not so!—No, no! I was horribly, cruelly deceived!

"But let me onward. Those three months were all felicity. At the end of that time there came a rumour that the plague had again appeared in Florence; and all the neighbouring nobles prepared to shut themselves within their dwellings, and avoid the contagion. I asked him what *he* intended to do? He said, 'In the first instance, I intend to go down to Florence, and ascertain the truth. Then,' he

added, throwing his arms round me, 'then, my Laura, we must do our duty. I blame not those who shrink, having children to depend upon them, to shield and to protect. We have none; and our course is straightforward. How I shall bear it, I know not; for, often as I have gone into the battle, often as I have confronted death, I never yet took all that I loved on earth along with me; I never yet hazarded, at every step, a life I value so much beyond my own. Say, Laura, can you make up your mind to go with me, amongst the wretched and the dying, to pour the healing draught upon the parched tongue of him stricken by the pestilence, to soothe the dying hour, to smooth the couch of agony, to gaze upon livid torments that may be our own the next moment, and encounter at every step the lurid plague in its most frightful form?'

" 'Henry,' I said, returning the embrace in which he held me; 'Henry, it may wake all the terrors of my mortal nature; it may shake the feeble limbs, and unnerve the woman's frame; but it shall not affect my heart. Whither thou goest will I go; the fate that thou encounterest will I encounter: I am thine, Henry, through life—thine unto death itself!'

" On his return from Florence he somewhat calmed our apprehensions. The skilful had declared that the fever which then raged, though like the plague, was not the plague; but still it increased, still it spread through the country, still it approached nearer and nearer to our dwelling. The time came when our resolution was to be put to the proof. We went into the cottages, we visited the sick and the dying, we encountered many a fearful sight and many a horrible scene; but we felt a pride and a pleasure in so doing; we felt a joy in doing so together.

" At length, when the scourge was somewhat abated, we

returned home one day, after riding out to gain the free air upon the mountains: it was the first relaxation we had known; but, when we came home, I saw that my husband's cheek was pale, and twice he put his hand to his brow. My heart throbbed terribly as I marked that gesture, and gazed upon that look. He passed the night in feverish tossing to and fro: and, by the next morning, the wild delirium of the sickness was upon him.

"I left not his bedside: I tended him night and day. With a heart thrilling with every motion of his fevered frame I watched him, and with a love, oh! how deep—how intense—how terrible! Would I had not done so; would I had left him to the hands of the mercenary! But I could not do it, and I was fearfully rewarded! While the delirium was yet strong upon him, he spoke wildly of many things; and I saw that still his wandering mind turned back to the events of his past life. He gave his commands as in the battle; he addressed imaginary monarchs on the events of policy; he argued with old companions of sports long past away. Sometimes it was all clear and distinct, sometimes it was but murmuring confusion. At length, I think it was on the morning of the fourth terrible day, he raved more vehemently than ever, and his words were fierce and angry. Dark and bitter reproaches hung upon his lip, and he poured forth many a cutting, many a sorrowful rebuke to some one, for lost honour, and dark ingratitude, and love but ill repaid. Then came a woman's name, murmured in the tone of deep though sorrowing affection. He spoke it thrice; and the third time he called Heaven to witness how nobly he had loved her! That name was not mine! and an assassin's dagger would have been mercy compared with that sound.—He, then, had loved another! I was not the first choice of his heart: the first deep feelings of his bosom had been for another; she

was still remembered—nay, perhaps, still loved ! ‘ Oh, Marie, Marie ! ’ he had cried, ‘ how truly, how nobly did I love thee ! ’ and the sound rang in my ears for ever ! He had loved another ! In the early spring of youth ; in the green vigour of passion ; in the fresh beauty of the heart’s sweetest feelings, he had loved another ! He might love me on better motives—he might love me wisely, nobly, well ; he might love me with judgment as well as with passion ! But what was all that to the fresh thoughtless ardour of his youth ?

“ Oh, God ! how my heart did ache for many a long day, and many a weary night, after I had heard that name ! And yet I strove to do what was right : I struggled hard to moderate my feelings, to crush out that memory from my thoughts, to be to him and to feel to him, as if the treacherous delirium had never betrayed to me the treasured secret of his bosom. I struggled hard ; and, luckily, the fever lasted some days longer ere he regained any degree of consciousness. My father attributed the sadness of my countenance to anxiety for my husband’s life ; the attendants thought that I was wearing myself down to the grave with labouring to save him from it : but none knew the adder’s fang that rankled in my heart. My father had been absent when those words were pronounced ; and they had been spoken, not in our own sweet tongue, though he used it commonly like a native of the land, but in the language of his own country, which the servants understood not. The secret—the painful secret rested with me alone—the drop of poison fell upon the very heart which had no antidote.

“ At length, the crisis of the fever passed ; and he began to tread back the path from the grave’s gates to the bright land of life : but that illness had taken from him, and from me, that which no after time could restore. Not that I loved him less : oh, no, no ! I loved him more—more deeply

—more ardently than ever, because more painfully. But it had taken from him the bounding confidence with which my heart had always sprung to meet him, the free expansive torrent of all my thoughts and all my feelings, poured unreserved into his bosom. From me it had taken the bright, happy, fearless certainty of being loved—of having been loved alone. The sky of our united being was no longer all bright; and the first time that he pressed me in his arms after that long illness, oh, how sadly, how bitterly, did I feel that there had come a change upon me.

“He recovered fully; and far from enfeebling, far from injuring him, the fever seemed to have left him more beautiful, more strong, more graceful than before. The peasantry came in crowds to see him, and to bless him: and, as he moved amongst them, my heart felt proud, my spirit was glad; but still, as it rejoiced, a voice I could not silence repeated the hated name in my ear. I strove, as I have said, to conquer all such thoughts; I tried to act, and think, and feel, as I had done before; but I could not do so altogether, though I succeeded in part: I was graver than I had been, a touch of melancholy would come upon me, and he remarked it. Then he would soothe me, and gaze upon me with a tenderness that could not be mistaken, and would accuse himself of having subjected me to scenes and duties too much for my gentle and compassionate nature. At other times, too, he would declare I had injured my health in tending him, and he would press me to his heart, and gaze into my eyes, and strive to repay me by deep devotion.

“Thus, he deceived himself as to the cause of the change he beheld; but there was one who saw more deeply, though he saw not yet aright. My father marked the sadness that had come over me: and often would I catch his eyes first fix upon me with a look of inquiring thought, and then turn

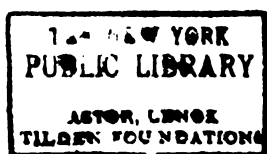
towards my husband, while a frown gathered on the brow above them. One day, too, when we were alone together, he took me in his arms, and gazing tenderly upon me, he said, 'Laura, my beloved child! thou art not so happy as thou deservedst to be. I doubt, I fear, that we have been both mistaken. Tell me, is thy husband such unto thee as thy father's heart could wish?' and as he spoke there came a flashing fury from his eyes, which shewed how deep, how strong was that parental love which caused the question.

"I gazed on him in return for a moment, and I could have burst into tears, but I knew that to do so would only confirm suspicions which were false and groundless, and, therefore, I struggled to repress the drops that would have fain gushed forth. 'Laura,' he added, seeing that something strove within me and kept me silent; 'Laura, I adjure thee by a father's love, to tell me the truth! I have trusted him with a treasure such as none else could give: and, oh, if he abuse it, severely shall he reckon with me!'

"'Father,' I replied, 'never in life did I tell you a falsehood! and I tell you now, that he is all that is noble, and good, and kind—all that your heart could wish him. I may not be so well as I have been,' I added, wishing to avoid further questions; 'I may not be so well; and it is vain to deny, that my sensations are not so cheerful; but it is mere sensation, for, on my life, I do believe that there is not anything on earth my husband would not do to make me happy.'

"Several weeks passed over, and it was spring again; the bright world put on the green garments of early youth, all seemed fresh and happy around me: and I reproached myself, that I, like the year, could not cast off the wintry cloud that had come upon me, and be as gay and smiling again as ever I had been.

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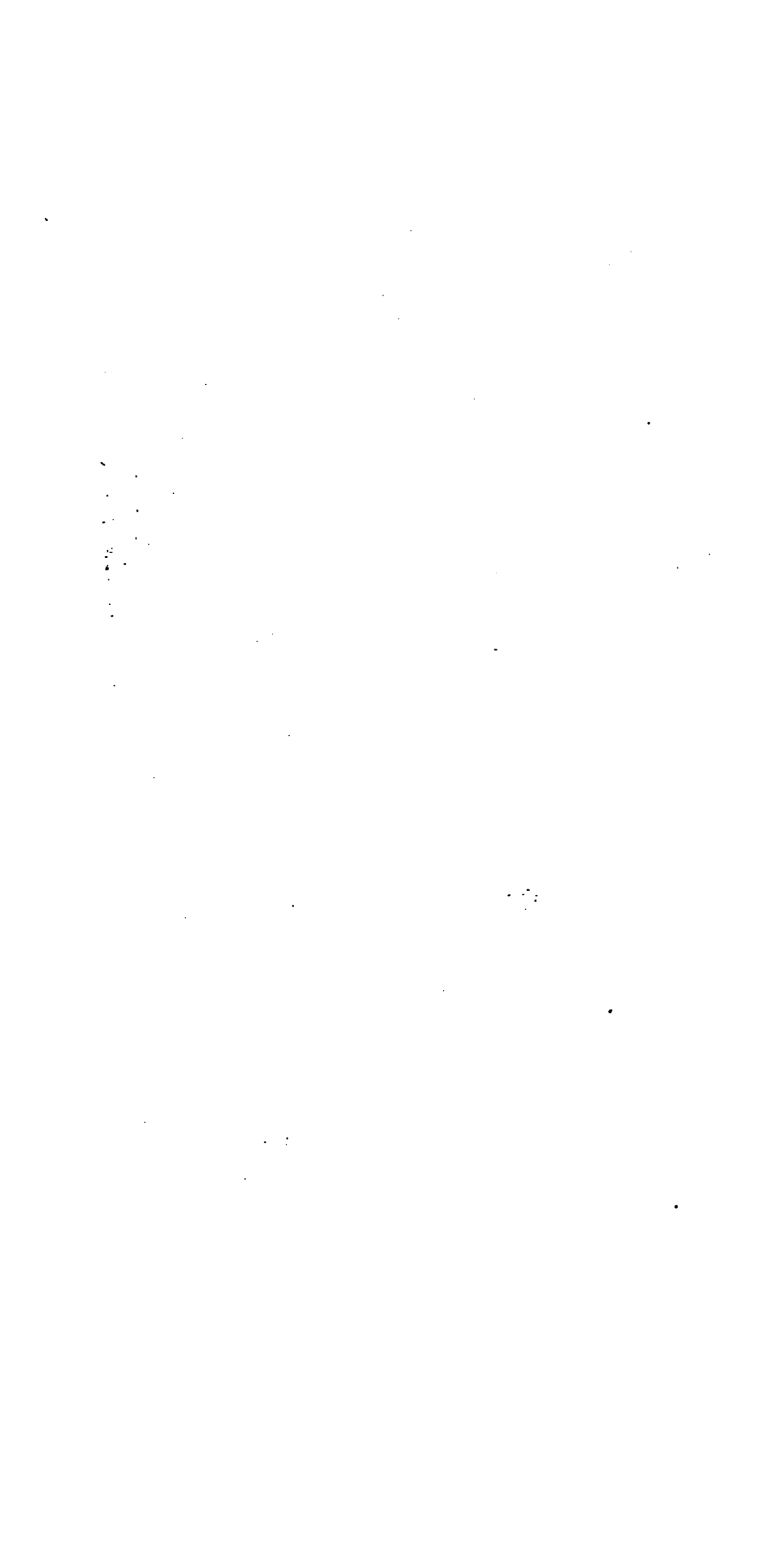


17. 17. 17.

17. 17. 17.

The scene is set in a balcony, where a man in a dark, patterned robe stands, gesturing upwards with his right hand while holding a sword in his left. A woman in a light-colored, patterned dress sits on the balcony railing, looking up at him. In the background, another figure is seated, and a landscape with a distant city and a bright sun or moon is visible. A small dog lies on the floor in the foreground.

17. 17. 17.



“ It was one bright evening in the midst of May, and my husband sat beside me in the portico, with his arm cast lightly round me ; while my father, at a little distance, sat reading some tale of classic lore. We gazed over that beautiful valley, and our thoughts held unspoken communion on all the bright things before us. Some rain had fallen on the preceding day, and had swelled the river, so that the eye caught it glistening amongst the trees as it wound round the bases of the wooded hills. The light evening wind waved the long branches of the chestnuts, and pointed their leafy fingers towards the glowing west ; and the olives clothing the mount, on which stands the Convent of the Trinity, bending before the breeze, seemed to scatter a purple dust from their light branches as they waved to and fro. The convent, itself, stood out upon the bright sky, with tower, and pinnacle, and wall, in clear dark masses, and not far below were seen, breaking the sweeps of forest, the graceful lines of the Villa Montaroni, which my husband still possessed, though he had ceased to inhabit it. Seldom have I beheld that beautiful scene look more lovely than at that moment, and, as with few words but many thoughts, we commented on its beauty, a calm but entrancing joy pervaded both our hearts, and came like balm, especially to mine.

“ ‘ Laura,’ said my husband, at length, ‘ do we not feel alike, beloved ? do we not feel that there is some sympathetic harmony between everything in external nature and the world of our own hearts ? Do we not feel, that in all the changes and varieties that are brought over the face of the grand universe, some mighty musician is but playing, as on an instrument, drawing forth from the chords of the human heart sweet sounds as he touches every stop in nature ? With what gay music do our bosoms ring at the sight of the

bright and glittering dawn of summer ! how deep and awful are the sounds struck from the chords within our breasts, as we gaze upon the grand sublimity of the passing storm ? and, when we look over a scene like this, in the tranquil loveliness of its evening repose, is it not as if memory sang within us the calm requiem of our departed years ?

“ I listened and looked up with love ; and he went on :— ‘ It is a blessed thing, a sweet and blessed thing, that power of memory, which takes the poison out of painful things, and leaves the healed wound tender, but still closed. Were I to tell the story of my past life, I would choose such an evening, and such a scene as this.’

“ ‘ Let it be now, let it be now !’ I exclaimed, clasping my hands eagerly.

“ ‘ Well, it shall be so, beloved,’ he replied ; ‘ there may be painful things in the history, but I have often thought to tell it to you ; and I will tell you now.’

“ At that very moment he was interrupted by one of the attendants, who came to inform him that a stranger at the gate desired to speak with him. He instantly bade the servant admit the person of whom he spoke : and a man was ushered in, clothed in somewhat rude and travel-soiled garments, and with a face burned by exposure to many a summer sun. His sudden appearance moved my husband as I had never seen him moved before. He first turned deadly pale, then red ; laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword, and then letting it go again, held up his finger to the stranger as if to enjoin silence. The next moment he addressed him in a tongue which I did not understand ; and, going forth upon the terrace together, they continued long in vehement conversation. I saw my husband give the stranger gold ; I saw him point, too, to the Villa Montaroni. They then walked down into the gardens below, and we could hear

their voices conversing until night fell, and all was darkness : the stranger then departed, and my husband returned to the saloon ; but he was agitated, absent, strange, and, after a few moments, painful to us both, he retired into his cabinet to write.

“ I, too, was moved ; I, too, was agitated ; I, too, was full of agonising thoughts and emotions, over which reason owned no control. Memory, which we had both thought so sweet, now acted the part of a torturing fiend. That name, that fatal name, which he had pronounced in the ravings of the fever, rang in my ears for ever. It banished sleep from my couch, peace from my heart ; the silence of the night echoed it back upon me : the solitude of my own chamber became peopled with fearful images.

“ It was long before my husband sought repose ; and when he did so, he thought I slept, and spoke not to me. But I slept not, and the dawning of the morning appeared grey in the sky before I closed my eyes. Then weariness overpowered me, but when I woke my husband was gone. Rising, I called my women, and dressed myself hastily, sending one of the maidens to ask of his attendants where was the count ? The reply was, that he had gone forth to hunt ; but I felt and knew it was a falsehood !

“ My heart throbbed as if it would have burst, my brain seemed on fire, I trembled in every limb ; and the tirewoman who strove to fix my bracelets on, could scarcely clasp them for several minutes, so violently was my whole frame shaken. I knew not what to do—I knew not how to act. A thousand vague, wild projects rushed across my brain, and seemed ready to distract me. At one time I intended to go down to the Villa Montaroni instantly, and see if he were there ; at another, I thought that I would send servants to follow the track of the horse’s feet ; at another, I determined to go and

cast myself at my father's feet, and tell him all—all my suspicions, all my jealousy, all my apprehensions : but then, I asked myself, what could I tell him ? he had seen the stranger as well as I had ; he had remarked my husband's conduct too. I strove to calm myself ; I strove to reason against my passion : but what is reason against such feelings—against such madness as I then felt ?

“ At length, however, I became calm enough to go down into the saloon ; my father was standing there, gazing from the window, and his brow was clouded too ; but, though he gazed upon me long and earnestly, he took no notice of my paleness, my agitation—no, nor of my tears, for I could not repress them, and I wept. We took the morning meal together alone ; and immediately after it was finished, he said to one of the attendants, ‘ Are my horses ready ? ’

“ ‘ Not yet, my lord,’ replied the man ; ‘ but there is old Anetta waiting without, earnestly seeking to speak with the Lady Laura.’

“ At the very mention of one seeking to speak with me at that moment, my heart fluttered as if it had been the annunciation of death ; and, in a voice the man could scarcely hear, I bade him take the old woman to my apartments. She had been my nurse, and now lived in her son's house near the Convent of the Trinity. No sooner did she see me, than she came forward and kissed me ; and as I had no words to ask her errand, she burst forth without further inquiry, exclaiming, ‘ Alack, lady ! alack, my dear child ! we all did think that thou hadst got a husband such as is not to be found in all the world ; but, well-a-day ! men have all their faults.’

“ ‘ What of my husband ? ’ I gasped ; ‘ tell me all at once ! Use few words ! be quick, be quick ! ’

“ A moment of the rack must seem like many a livelong

day ; and that woman's tale, though she had little to tell, was to me a whole age of misery. A fair and beautiful lady,—such was the substance of her story,—had come on the evening before, and besought hospitality at the Convent of the Trinity. She had with her a young child and two servants, one of whom had instantly been despatched to our villa, and, on his return, had immediately removed his lady to the Villa Montaroni. She herself, she said, had passed by that place in the morning, and had beheld my husband enter the gardens where the lady was walking with her child ; and, taking her in his arms, he had pressed her fondly to his bosom. I heard no more ; but, starting up, I darted down the staircase, sought out my father, who was just preparing to mount his horse, and, falling at his feet, I told him all. He heard me without the slightest movement of surprise.

“ ‘ Laura,’ he said, ‘ I knew the whole early this morning ; and I am prepared, even now, to avenge you—to avenge you, both upon him who has slighted such a treasure as thou art, and upon his base paramour.’

“ ‘ Not upon him ! not upon him ! my father,’ I cried, clasping his knees,—‘ not upon him ! he is dearer to me than myself ; but upon her,’ I added, while all the fiends of hell seemed busy in my heart,—‘ but upon her, if you so will ; for she and your daughter cannot live upon the same earth together ! I or she must die ! But not upon him, my father, not upon him, if you would not lose your child !’

“ He paused, but replied not ; and I read in the stern determination of his face the fixed and fearful purpose of his heart. ‘ My father,’ I cried, ‘ remember I am your own child, and can be as resolute as you are. Promise me—promise me that he shall go free from word or wound, from injury, or any attempt at injury whatsoever, or, here at

your feet, you shall first see your own child's blood flow ;' and, as I spoke, I snatched the dagger from his girdle.

"He promised me with an oath, and starting upon my feet, I cried, 'Go ; but, oh ! be not long ere you return to me, lest I should go distracted.'

"He sprang upon his horse, and rode away. I heard the sound of the gates open to give him exit, I heard the sound of horses' feet galloping down into the valley, and then I fell at once, like a dead being, on the pavement of the saloon.

"They carried me into my husband's dressing-room, but it was long, it seems, ere they could bring me to myself ; and a sick faintness still hung upon me, which oppressed and kept down the fiery passions of my heart. As I thus lay in their arms, and gazed languidly around, a large packet of writing, lying on the table, caught my eye, and I moved my hand towards it. One of the women brought it me instantly. It was in my husband's handwriting, and addressed to myself. With frantic eagerness I tore it open and read. 'Laura, my beloved,' it began, 'I was about to tell thee my sad history, when we were interrupted ; but it becomes imperatively necessary for me to do so now, as the fate of your husband is more or less bound up with that of an unhappy being who is now within less than a mile of our dwelling. Although her sad errors have for three years banished her from the bosom of that brother to whose affection she now flies once more for protection and support—

" 'Her brother !' I muttered, 'her brother !'—and vague, horrible, dreadful anticipations began to gather round my heart. My eye glanced on, and I read,—'My only sister, Marie, of whom I speak, is much younger than myself.'

" 'His sister !' I cried, starting up with a loud shriek,—

‘oh, God! oh, God! what have I done? Fly, fly!’ I continued, turning to the women, ‘send out horsemen after the marquis! Quick, quick, to Montaroni! Tell him we have been in error! Bid him return, and save me from madness! Fly! why do you linger?’ They all quitted me to obey, except one girl born in the country, who said, ‘Lady, there is the shorter way by the gardens and orchards. Shall I go on foot? I shall be there long before the horsemen.’

“‘I will go myself,’ I said, starting up,—‘I will go myself!’ and darting down to the saloon, followed only by the girl Juditha, I passed down by the terraces and gardens in an agony of mind that is madness even to remember. I flew rather than walked through the long rows of vines and fig-trees, till I reached the walls of the garden of Montaroni. There was one door immediately before me, and one at the bottom of the slope, leading, by steps within the walls, to the terrace above. I tried the first, but it was locked. There were voices, too, of people speaking on the terrace; one was using tones of supplication, the other replied but little.

“I shook the door vehemently, calling aloud for admittance; but no one answered, and I ran down to the other door. As I laid my hand upon the lock, there was a loud ringing shriek, as from a woman’s lips; but the door gave way to my hand, and I entered. At the foot of the steps stood my father, with his face as pale as death, and his sword drawn in his hand.

“‘Laura,’ he exclaimed, ‘you here? It is done! it is done, my child! We were obliged to watch till he left her, that I might keep my promise, and not include him in our vengeance! but it is done! See: there comes Pietro with the dagger in his hand!’

“My only reply was a deep groan; but, darting past my father and the man who had done the actual deed, I ran up

to the terrace, and there, amongst the orange-trees beside the fountain, I found her lying drenched in gore. Unhappy Marie de Morney ! There she lay, with the rich clusters of her beautiful hair falling on that fair bosom, from which was pouring forth the stream of life. The assassin had struck her skilfully—unto the very heart ! and death—cold, grey death—was seen in every feature and in every hue. I stood and gazed as one turned to marble. It had a strange power in it, that awful sight, to fix me there immovable. My father called me eagerly, but in vain ; I moved not. The girl, Juditha, who followed pale and trembling, tried to draw me away ; but she had not power. But a minute after came a sound the most fearful on earth to my ear—once the most musical ! It was my husband's voice ; and I could have sunk into the earth. He was impeded by my father's servants, who had possession of the house ; and I could hear him cry, ' Let go ; or, as there is a God in heaven, I will cleave you to the earth !

" There was time to fly, but I had no power ; and I stood by the side of the dead, as motionless and pale. The next moment, he was before me ; and, oh God ! the angry horror of that one look he gave me will never, never pass away from my eyes. He looked upon the corpse of his sister, and he looked upon me, and, drawing his dagger from his side, he held the hilt towards me, saying, with the slow, low-toned words of intense passion,—' Lady, you cannot yet be sated. A woman's blood cannot be enough for one of your high race ; take the brother's also—his bosom is bare before you !'

" I could not answer—my tongue was palsied ; my brain produced no thought but agony ; all that I had beyond a statue, was consciousness ; all I could do, was to clasp my hands, and look in his face, imploring mercy. But at that moment, my father and the assassin mounted the steps. The

sound of people coming from the house was also heard, and my husband gave a sharp look behind him ; another at me, and at the corpse. A sudden flash of frenzied agony came across his countenance, and he struck the dagger into his own bosom.

“ Then the spell was broken ; then, then I found motion and a tongue ; but it was loudly to call for help, it was to rend the air with my shrieks, it was to fall at his feet—for he still stood firm—and wildly, madly to beseech him to live, to live to save me from distraction. But a calm and awful tranquillity had come over his noble face.

“ ‘ Laura,’ he said, ‘ I am dying : and well it is that I am so ; for did I live, I must live to punish and avenge. Why you have done this deed,’ he continued, more faintly, ‘ I know not. But yet, take off your hands, I must not be touched by a hand stained with the blood of my sister.’

“ ‘ Your sister !’ cried my father, who had now come up ; ‘ your sister !—Tread upon me ! tread upon me !’ he exclaimed, casting himself at the count’s feet. ‘ We have murdered the innocent !’

“ Still, too, I clasped his knees, I besought him not to spurn me from him, and, with wild and vehement words, I told him how I had been deceived. He listened to me, though, by the ashy paleness that was coming over his face, I could see the triumph of the angel of destruction ; but still he listened to me ; and a smile,—a bright and beautiful smile, the last, the loveliest,—came upon his lip, as if it pleased him to hear anything that could palliate my crime. He laid his hand upon my head, as I knelt before him. ‘ Poor child !’ he said, ‘ if it be so, thou art far more to be pitied than she is ;’ and he pointed to his sister. ‘ She died when, deeply penitent for one sad error, she was about to bury the memory of her shame in the shade of the cloister,

and to dedicate her future days to ask pardon of her God: whilst thou must live on, unhappy girl, to all the bitter pangs of memory. Kneel not there, my lord,' he continued, addressing my father, 'kneel not there; it becomes thee not! But lend me your aid to yonder seat, for I feel that my strength is failing fast.'

"A number of the servants had gathered round, and they partly supported, partly bore, him towards the seat to which he pointed. The motion made the blood stream down from his bosom, and I thought I should have gone distracted as I saw it flow.

"'Where is the child?' he said at length, when he was seated; 'where is the child?' And they brought him immediately a beautiful and smiling infant, which he pressed to his gory bosom. 'Poor orphan!' he said, as it played with the golden tassels of his cloak. 'Poor orphan! fruit of an ungrateful monarch's baseness and a woman's weakness,—I leave thee in this dark, cold world, alone. Yet witness, all here present, that I bequeath unto this child everything that I possess in Italy. My lands beyond the Alps must go, of right to others; but to him I give all that I have here. And, if there be one good soul, who to this poor child will act a father's part—will breed him up in faith and honour, truth and virtue—the blessing of God, and of a dying man, fall on him! But, oh! above all things, let them teach him confidence in virtue, trust in friendship, faith in love; for suspicion, accursed suspicion! is even more deceitful than the basest hypocrite on earth.—Let some one take the child, for I am faint!'

"He paused a moment, and I knelt at his feet; for the words that he had spoken to the child had made me weep, and those tears had relieved my brain. I knelt, then, at his feet, and looked up towards his face, to see if he would

but notice me again. His eyes closed for a moment, and his lips murmured a prayer. He then looked down upon me, and said, 'Laura, I pardon thee! God, too, I trust, will pardon thee; but I fear thou wilt never pardon thyself. Yet, for this last moment of my life, come once more to my arms! Sit here beside me; let me lean my head upon thy bosom. Oh, Laura! couldst thou but tell how I have loved thee—how solely and alone—thou wouldst never have doubted. I never loved but thee; I loved thee as woman was never loved! I love thee, even now!'

"I felt his head, as it rested on my bosom, weigh heavily upon me; but yet I would not move, nor could I speak; but I sat and wept, and my tears fell amongst the curls of his hair. A moment after, a priest entered the garden, having heard that some one was dying; and, advancing at once towards us, he gazed upon my husband.

"'Art thou yet amongst the living, my son?'" he said.

"There was no answer.

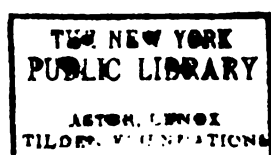
"'Daughter,' continued the priest, 'thy bosom is not the grave; let it give up the dead to the mansions of the dead. The spirit has departed!'

"They took him from my bosom; but yet I clung to him. I could not, I would not believe that all was at an end; that hope, happiness, peace, innocence, were all lost in an hour; that jealousy, by one dark blow, had brought every blessing of existence to an end at once. They held me back, and they tore him away. What happened then, I know not, for there is a lapse in memory of many a day. I believe those days were filled with madness, though no one has ever told me so; but when I came to remembrance again, I was here, in one of the cells of this very convent; and the abbess, in whose veins flowed the same blood as in my own, was sitting beside me, watching me. When some

vigour returned to my weakened frame, and I asked fearful questions concerning the past, she told me, that there was a strange and awful tale abroad concerning the death of my husband, and of a lady supposed to be his sister, at the Villa Montaroni. Her words drove me mad again, and I raved of all that had taken place : but now I knew that I was raving ; I felt that my words were wild, incoherent, and dangerous, though I had no power to check them. But that power soon returned ; and when I asked more questions, the answers were more cautious. I found that my father had left the land, and was warring with some foreign army. His power, and high name, had crushed inquiry, in a land where the arm of the law is weak and negligent. But still there were strange rumours. The tale was magnified ; his share in those sad deeds misrepresented ; and now, after twenty years of unavailing sorrow, and of penitence and prayer more efficacious, if there be truth in promises of mercy, I have sat down to and accomplished the terrible task of telling my own sad history. It is a part of my punishment to do so ; for I would not that my father's wounded name should bear all the dull, dim stains that men now cast upon it.

“ It is over, and my heart feels lighter that it is done ! for, though darkness and sorrow are yet my portion, a ray of hope from heaven—a foretaste of mercy from above—comes to calm and tranquillise my spirit. May the time be shortened ; may the days be rendered brief ; may this weary life soon come to its close, and the frail body rest in that dark mansion where already lie that father whose only crime on earth was committed out of love for me, and that husband whom I loved even to madness.”

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W. H. Miller

THE WEDDING



REVENGE.

IT was the beautiful sunshiny afternoon of a Saturday in the month of September, when, in a wide lawn, sloping upwards, bounded by high walls, and shaded at one end by a row of fine old pines, thirty or forty boys were playing, from the age of twelve to fifteen. The master of the school—for a school it was—was seated in his library, from which he could see the sports of his pupils; and, not very far from the house, a group of eight or ten of the elder scholars were amusing themselves with some game, which it is not necessary to particularise.

In the midst of their sport, a younger and much smaller boy cut across and interrupted the proceedings of a tall handsome, but somewhat swarthy youth, who instantly fell upon him and struck him several severe blows, adding, at the same time, with a contemptuous sneer, the expression, "Little bastard!" The boy cried more at the name applied to him, it would appear, than at the blows; and the other, seeming to rejoice at the power of inflicting pain, repeated the name, and was adding another blow, when a youth, of the same age, started forward and turned it aside, exclaiming, "Henry Dillon, you shall not hit him any more, nor call him by that name again."

"Who shall prevent me?" exclaimed the other: "it is his right name, and he knows it."

"If you come to that," rejoined the other, "it is your right name too; so I think you might take care how you give it to another."

The boys who stood round instantly set up a loud and laughing shout; and Henry Dillon, with all the wrath of a demon blazing from his eyes, instantly struck his new antagonist a severe blow, which was retaliated with such force as to stretch him at once upon the ground. A regular battle would have taken place, in all probability, had not the master appeared upon the steps, and called the two boys, with three or four others as witnesses, into his library.

The cause of the affray was then investigated fairly, and the master expressed his determination to punish severely the conduct of Henry Dillon: adding,—“I wonder, sir, how you, of all men, dare to make use of a term towards one of your schoolfellows, which, though in no degree really degrading to him as an individual, must always be most painful to his feelings. Nor were you, Charles Neville,” he continued, turning to him who had been the champion of the younger boy, —“nor were you at all blameless in having retaliated upon Dillon—whether truly or falsely I shall not inquire—the coarse and ungentlemanlike epithet he applied to another.”

“I know, sir, I was very wrong,” replied Neville, with an honest glow upon his face; “I know, sir, I am very wrong: though what I said was quite true, for——”

“Hush!” cried the master; “do not add to your fault by repeating it. The punishment I shall inflict on you is, to beg Dillon’s pardon for what you have said.”

“That I will, willingly,” replied Charles Neville. “Dillon, I am very sorry, indeed, for what I said, and I beg your pardon with all my heart.” He held out his hand to the

other at the same time; but Dillon turned away with a scowl; and the master, who remarked all that passed, dismissed Neville and the witnesses, but kept Dillon with him for some time.

It was a childish quarrel, and the matter was passed over, and apparently forgotten by all. For ten years, remembrance of it slumbered; and, therefore, over those ten years we will pass in silence, and take up our tale at their conclusion.

Exactly ten years after, to a day, a large and brilliant party was assembled at the breakfast-table of a noble house, in one of the most beautiful parts of Shropshire. The room was long, and well lighted from a large bay-window, looking over a lawn, declining from the house into a wide park, where many a brown deer might be seen raising its antlered head. Tall elms and graceful beeches skirted the distant prospect, and nothing was seen around but the calm varieties of an English nobleman's domain; tranquil, soft, and peaceful; inspiring images of easy and elegant retirement, and not undignified repose. Some twelve or fourteen persons sat around the table, and several places were left unoccupied, for the less matutinal guests. The party, however, assembled, included within itself enough to render their meeting cheerful and pleasant: for, though the male part of the guests had come down thither upon the pretence, or for the purpose of field-sports, yet they were in general of that quality of mind which mingles the exercise of the intellectual with that of the corporeal faculties, and gives a zest to each enjoyment by contrasting it with some other.

Midway down the table sat the master of the mansion; a nobleman somewhat advanced in years, but still with all his powers of mind and body unimpaired by time. Two gay young women, distantly connected with himself, sat by the side of pleasant old Lord Grange, and exerted themselves not

a little to amuse him at his breakfast ; while, at the further end of the table, on household cares intent, appeared the baron's eldest daughter, who might well have personified Hebe herself, and have taken the task of dispensing nectar to the gods. Close by her, again, sat as handsome a young man as the eye ever lighted upon. He was tall, powerful, graceful ; and the dark brown hair, sweeping in wavy curls around his forehead, shaded, but did not conceal, the broad expanse of brow, which betokened, not unjustly, high talents of various kinds. All the features of the face were good in drawing, and yet, in looking upon him, the mind desired something different, without well perceiving what. Was it that the lip naturally or habitually, curled with a slight sneer ? Was it that the eyes, fine as they were, approached somewhat too near together ? Was it that a sudden cloud would, every now and then, gather in a moment on the brow, and would only be swept away again when he spoke to somebody that he desired to please ? Such was ever the case when the voice of Miss Grange struck his ear : the wrinkle in the forehead was done away with in a moment, whenever he addressed her, or she spoke to him. Nor was she, apparently, ill pleased with the attention which he paid, and the admiration which he did not disguise.

Not far from her was her younger sister, Lucy ; possessing beauty, perhaps less striking, but more fascinating—calmer, more retiring, more timid, perhaps—than her sister. Her whole face and form were in harmony with her character : though not pale, she was paler than Miss Grange ; though tall, she was not so tall. Her graces were all of a quieter order ; her movements, without being slow, were never hurried ; and though by no means taciturn, it was but to few that she spoke very much, and to still fewer that she spoke very long. An officer in the army—a gay, pleasant

man enough—sat beside her, and endeavoured zealously to entertain her. She listened, and she smiled, and she replied, quite sufficiently to shew that she was amused and pleased, and that she wished to give pleasure again; but it went no further; and it was evident to every one that she was not seeking admiration.

It matters not of whom the rest of the party consisted: with those whom we have described we have to deal, and with none others. When breakfast was just done,—and Lord Grange rose from the table, sauntering towards the window, to think over the proceedings of the coming day,—a servant, well powdered and arranged, entered the room, and informed his lordship that Mr. Graham, the steward, wished to speak with him. His lordship immediately begged his guests to excuse him, and proceeded to his library, where he found his steward already seated, and spreading out upon the table some papers which were to be examined, regarding various portions of his estates.

The steward was a young man of, perhaps, three-and-twenty, but looking a great deal older, who had been bred up regularly to the law, and had withered through his youth at the dull desk of an attorney's clerk. He was, however, a man of information and of talent, with the best head in the world for business; and Lord Grange discovered, after his former steward's death, that he had got quite a treasure in his place. For more than a year he had now filled that situation, and he had gradually acquired a great influence with the peer, who found his opinion of much value in matters not at all connected with his professional duties.

The business upon which Mr. Graham had come was soon discussed, and the steward was rising to depart; but Lord Grange made him a sign not to go, saying,—“I have something on which I wish to speak to you, Mr. Graham.

I have down, staying here, young Dillon, who has lately been making such a figure in the London world, and in the House of Commons. I have him here, staying with me."

"So I see, my lord," replied the lawyer.

"You know him, then?" demanded Lord Grange.

"I have not exactly the honour of his acquaintance," replied Mr. Graham; "but I have seen him often."

Though the lawyer's tone was always somewhat dry, and often sharp, Lord Grange thought he perceived an additional degree of brevity and sourness therein; and he added, "He is likely to be here very often, Mr. Graham; for he has made proposals to me for my eldest daughter."

Mr. Graham neither looked surprised, nor pleased, nor displeased: and he said not a word; so that Lord Grange had nothing for it, but to let the matter drop, or go on himself.

"You know, Graham," he said, using a more familiar tone, "that I would never wish Caroline to marry any man she does not like; and, therefore, I have told him that I leave it entirely in her own hands. But still, his fortune is immense,—forty thousand per annum, I am told."

"At least, my lord," replied the lawyer; "for old Alfred Dillon, of Northumberland, this gentleman's father, never kept any society at all, and laid by—not without great skill and judgment in the placing it—very nearly the whole of his large income, for the sake of this boy. Because he could not leave him one of the principal estates, you know."

Lord Grange started. "How so?" he exclaimed; "why not? I understood he had succeeded to all his father's property."

"Oh, no, my lord," replied the lawyer; "the principal estate, nearly ten thousand a-year, went to the heir of entail. As I see your lordship is ignorant, it is right you should be

informed that this young man is in the same unfortunate predicament as myself—he is a natural son. His mother, I have heard, was his father's cook-maid."

Lord Grange was profoundly silent for a moment or two; and then, starting up, he replied,—“Well, Graham, good morning, good morning: see that those things be done. This won't do—this won't do at all.” And thus saying, he quitted the room, and returned to the company in the breakfast-room.

Scarcely had he rejoined his guests, when the sight of a carriage-and-four, driving towards the house, caught the attention of some of those who were gazing from the window, and, in a few minutes after, the door of the breakfast-room, in which they still were, was thrown open by a servant, who announced Captain Neville. A smile of satisfaction might then have been traced upon the countenance of almost everybody present. The old lord, himself, looked up with an air of rejoicing; but the pleasure which all felt took a different expression on the face of his youngest daughter Lucy. Her eyes, it is true, danced with gladness, and her lip wore a smile like the rest; but her cheek first turned very pale, and then very red, and she leaned her hand upon the table near her, as if she could scarcely stand without support.

The greeting of Charles Neville was, of course, first directed to the master of the mansion; but the next look was for Lucy Grange, and her hand was clasped in his, without any attempt, on either part, to conceal that it was a meeting full of joy to both. The old lord called him “my dear Charles;” and it was very evident to all present, that Captain Neville had returned from a long absence with the British army in the Peninsula, to obtain the willing hand of a well-beloved bride, with the consent and approbation of her father. There were many others in the circle

with whom Charles Neville was acquainted ; and, amongst the rest, he grasped the hand of Henry Dillon, his old schoolfellow, with unfeigned pleasure.

There is always something in the meeting with an acquaintance of our early youth, which re-awakens in our bosoms sensations but too seldom known to busy, struggling manhood : the chain between the present and the past seems suddenly completed, by the link of a face starting up before us from the long-gone years ; and a thousand sweet memories of innocent times, and happy days, and childish sports, play along the bonds of association, and give us back the sweet freshness of expanding life—like the balmy air which sometimes blows upon us from some breezy hill, left far behind, even while we are plodding on through the toilsome journey of the mid-day. Charles Neville felt all those sweet associations : the dreams of his childhood, the pleasures of his boyish days, were brought back upon his heart by the sight of his old companion ; all his old faults, and their mutual quarrels, were forgotten, and he grasped him by the hand as warmly as if it had been his brother. Henry Dillon's feelings were not quite so joyful ; but, nevertheless, he greeted his old schoolfellow warmly and kindly, and the day went over with cheerful serenity. A few minutes before the hour at which the party usually separated for the night, Lord Grange requested to speak with Mr. Dillon in his library. With what passed the rest of the guests remained unacquainted, but Henry Dillon appeared no more that night ; and next morning, long before the party assembled for breakfast, his carriage was rolling with him rapidly towards London.

Him we shall henceforth follow nearly to the end of the tale : but we must, in the first instance, turn back to mark what was passing in his bosom, when he sought his own

chamber after the interview with Lord Grange. Although his step was firm, and not a word proceeded from his lips, a thousand outward signs betrayed what was passing within. His cheek was flushed ; his brow was gathered into a heavy frown ; his fine white teeth were pressed upon his under lip, till the blood had nearly started beneath them ; and his eye, as it fixed with slow bitterness upon the ground, or flashed with hasty passion round the splendid staircase which he mounted to his chamber, shewed how fiercely he was moved, and promised some violence as the consequence. His valet, who was an observing and a serviceable man, clearly saw that something had irritated greatly a violent and haughty master, and wisely forebore from saying a word. Henry Dillon, however, cast himself into a chair, and wrote with angry haste a few hurried lines on a sheet of paper, folded it in the form of a letter, sealed and addressed it to Captain Charles Neville. The moment he had done so, however, he paused thoughtfully ; made a motion as if he would have given the note to his servant ; and then, suddenly drawing it back as the man was advancing to take it, he tore it into a thousand pieces, and cast it upon the floor.

“ No,” he exclaimed ; “ no ! that would be pitiful ! that would not be a thousandth part of what I will wreak upon him ! ” and, folding his hands and gnawing his lip, he sat with his eye fixed upon vacancy, meditating schemes of vengeance for a fancied injury. The thought did once cross him that it might not be Charles Neville who had informed Lord Grange of the illegitimacy of his birth—for on that subject had turned his conversation with the peer. But he rejected the doubt instantly ; asking himself, who else could it be ? The very day of his arrival the matter was made known ; and the bright prospects and cherished hopes which

he, Henry Dillon, had encouraged, were all blasted in an hour. His mind reverted to the days passed by ; he remembered that the voice of Charles Neville had first made known to his boyish companions the secret of his unfortunate birth. All the vengeful feelings which that first injury had given birth to were renewed in a moment, and aggravated a thousand-fold by the bitter disappointment he now suffered. It was intense, it was terrible, it amounted even unto agony, the longing, burning thirst for revenge, which now took possession of his soul. Every other passion was swallowed up in that. The unconfirmed love, in which interest and ambition had had their share ; that ambition itself, which had before seemed, even to his own eyes, one of the master passions of his mind ; all the hopes and aspirations of youth, imagination, and an ardent disposition ; all the feelings and attachments, the joys and the comforts, of which human nature is covetous : he was ready to sacrifice all—all, and every one—to quell that painful longing of his heart for revenge.

He was like the Eastern monarch who, bewildered amongst the sands of the desert, felt thirst, which he had never known before, till it became an anguish worse than death ; and who, in the agony of those dreadful moments, offered crown and dominion, power and pride, unbounded wealth and the luxury of an absolute will—all, in short, that had constituted his possession and his joy before, for one drop of water to cool his arid lip.

He would have given all for revenge. He was ready to sacrifice all ; he prepared to hazard all ; to risk fortune, fame, the world's applause, honour, station, life itself, for that dark, fearful cup. To some men, in such a moment of excited passion, the death of him he hated would have been sufficient ; and though they might have staked all to obtain that

satisfaction, they would have desired no more. But Dillon's vengeance took a wider range: his imagination was the slave of his passions; and, at their bidding, had, through life, built up, with her wild powers of enchantment, a thousand fairy fabrics in a moment, and spread out *the wide world of what may be*, as matter for aspiration and endeavour. And now, in the excitement of that hour, she displayed a thousand means, probable, improbable, and impossible, for ruining the object of his hatred; for pursuing him, step by step, through years of misery, to the brink of the grave; for depriving him of honour, and fortune, and love, and hope, and life, and wringing the last drop with agony from his heart. What, what, he asked himself, is there that a man with large fortune, great talents, and varied powers, cannot do, when he determines to use all means, to hesitate at no measures, to overleap all obstacles, to hazard all dangers, to sacrifice all other objects, for the one deep, determined purpose of his heart? He felt, that in casting from him the fear of death, dishonour, and destruction, with all the apprehensions of this world and of the next, he gained a power that submitted him he hated to his will: and, sending his servant from him, he remained, with his hands clasped over his eyes, meditating, through the livelong night, the schemes for carrying his dark purpose into effect.

From that moment Henry Dillon was a changed being. He abandoned all his former pursuits: the senate no longer heard the sounds of his eloquent voice; the court no longer beheld the graces of his striking person; ambition was forgotten; interest was no longer considered; the choice of his society was marked by what appeared to all men a strange and whimsical taste: and his movements were guided by principles which nobody could ascertain. He made no confidant; he trusted alone to his own powers; and bending

every energy, both of mind and body, to the one great object; he strove only and alone for revenge.

On a bright, sunshiny day, a carriage was driving rapidly through a little village in Dorsetshire, where a great deal of neatness, and even grace, characterised all the cottages, though they were cottages still. The whole place did not contain a hundred dwellings; and the wall of a park flanked it on one side. In the midst stood a little inn, or, to call it by its right name, a petty public-house; and as the carriage was driving by, with many a face staring at such an equipage as they seldom saw, the master thereof let down the front window, and commanded the postilions to stop. In a moment, the two servants who were behind sprang to the door; and, in a faint and feeble voice, their master told them that he was taken extremely ill, and commanded them to assist him into the inn. It contained no room in which he could be properly accommodated; and, while sitting in the public tap-room, with his head leaning on his hands, in apparently great agony, Henry Dillon desired that a surgeon might be sent for. The innkeeper himself ran up to the neighbouring hall, and informed its owner of what had just occurred in the village. That owner himself immediately came down, with several of his servants, and insisted upon Mr. Dillon being immediately removed to his own house.

He was a man considerably advanced in years, with a frank, kindly countenance; but with an habitual quickness of motion and of speech, which indicated a hasty disposition. Henry Dillon was removed to the hall; means were taken for giving him immediate relief; and a surgeon, who soon after appeared from a neighbouring town, declared that the gentleman's illness seemed to proceed from having taken some poisonous substance, though of what nature he could not say. No kindness was wanting on the part of the

master of the mansion; and when he came to visit the patient, after a few hours' sleep had been obtained, Dillon expressed the deepest gratitude for his benevolent attention, and begged to know the name of him to whom he was so much indebted.

"My name," replied the old gentleman, after declining all thanks,—“my name is Sir William Neville.”

"What!" exclaimed Dillon, with very marked surprise; "surely not the uncle of my old friend and schoolfellow, Charles Neville?"

"The same, my dear sir, the same," replied the old man. "But you seem surprised. Did the young dog ever mention me to you?"

"Frequently—frequently," replied Dillon; "but, in truth, I expected to see a much older man."

He said no more at that moment, but what he had said was sufficient; and Sir William Neville went away with a feeling of dissatisfaction towards his nephew, without very well knowing why. The apothecary sent in a great number of draughts, and Henry Dillon speedily began to recover from the temporary illness under which he had been suffering. But the medicines of his medical attendant had, certainly, no great share therein; for his valet, by his orders, poured them regularly behind the fire, at stated intervals. However, Dillon, as we have said, recovered rapidly; and, on the third morning, was sitting up, dressing himself to proceed on his journey, when a conversation took place between him and his valet, which was of some interest.

"He is a fine old man, indeed," said Dillon, in reply to some observation made by his servant: "I never was more surprised in my life than when he told me his name; for my friend Neville, of the —— dragoons, represented him as much older, and in his dotage—a mere driveller."

“ He is not that at all, sir,” replied the servant ; “ for, from what I hear in the neighbourhood, he does an immense deal of good amongst his tenantry ; so that every cottage-garden is quite a little pleasure-ground.”

“ Ay, that is what Neville used to blame him for,” replied Dillon. “ He used to say, that he was fooling away his money like a madman ; and that he was, in short, quite a driveller, as I said before.”

Henry Dillon spoke very loud ; and there was a door between the dressing-room in which he sat and the dressing-room of Sir William Neville. A chink of that door was open ; and, though Sir William Neville himself had long gone forth to ride, yet his old and confidential valet was busy in the dressing-room, and could not well avoid hearing every word that was said. Dillon took leave of his entertainer at luncheon, ere he proceeded on his journey : but, though the baronet was both kind and polite, there was a certain testy dryness of manner about him, which shewed that he was in an irritable mood ; and when Dillon sunk back in his carriage, there was a bitter, but triumphant smile, hanging upon his dark, but handsome countenance.

Just two days after the events we have above noticed, a gay and happy party was assembled at the house of Lord Grange, to witness the marriage of his daughter Lucy with Captain Charles Neville. Spring had now taken the place of winter ; the village church was all decked with flowers ; the villagers were crowding round the porch to see sweet Miss Lucy, as they called her, come as a bride to the altar : and in the mansion two happy hearts were beating with many a thrilling hope—with happiness and love. The boy who had been sent to the post town for letters had spurred his horse into double speed, in order to be back in time to see Miss Lucy’s wedding ; and the bag was put into Lord Grange’s hand just at the moment that the

party were waiting for the carriages to come round to convey them to the church. He looked over the letters carelessly, intending to read none of them till he returned. The address of one caught his eye, however, and seemed to interest him strongly ; for, casting down the others, he broke it open and read. It was very short, and to the following effect :—

“ My Lord,—As it has occurred to me, although nothing has been said upon the subject, that your lordship’s determination of giving your daughter in marriage to my nephew may be, in some degree, affected by the chance of his succeeding to my property, I think it but right to inform you, that it is not my intention to leave him any part thereof ; but, on the contrary, to bequeath everything I possess to my sister’s second son, William, Charles’s first cousin. I hope this letter will reach you in time to prevent any unpleasant misconceptions ; and have the honour to be, with compliments to Miss Lucy, and the rest of your family, your lordship’s most obedient servant,

“ WILLIAM NEVILLE.”

“ In time, and just in time,” said Lord Grange. “ Captain Neville, will you do me the favour of speaking with me in my library ?”

Charles Neville followed him in some surprise ; and, in an hour afterwards, Lucy Grange was weeping in her own chamber, and Charles Neville was posting down to his uncle’s seat to ascertain the motives of that extraordinary change which had blasted all his expected happiness, at the very moment of its accomplishment. As his carriage drove up to the house, he saw the windows half shut ; and he was met in the hall, before he could ask any questions,

by his aunt's husband, the father of the youth who was to be a gainer by his loss.

"Probably you have come, Captain Neville," said Sir John Stanmore, "to endeavour to alter your uncle's determination on a point which I feel must be very painful to you? Your coming, however, is too late to have that effect, as your uncle only lived a few hours after signing the will, which he sent for me to witness; by which he bequeathed to my second son, William, the whole of his property, except a few legacies, on condition of his taking the name and arms of Neville. I, of course, represent my son, during his absence with his ship; and I, together with your uncle's lawyer, have put my seal upon everything in the house. After the funeral, however, we will examine everything together, and I trust sincerely, that we may find something which may convey even a part of the property to you; as the amount of that which seems likely to fall to my son, is, doubtless, as much beyond his ambition, as it certainly was beyond his expectations."

Such *words of course* had little effect in soothing the mind of Charles Neville, who saw the cup of happiness snatched from his lip in a moment; and he returned to London with nothing but disappointment and despair. He wrote immediately to Lord Grange, informing him of the event; and in his letter he pleaded, with all the eloquence of love, against the fate which the cold and calculating father of Lucy Grange had assigned to him and her. He shewed, that, even without his commission in the army, which afforded him a certain prospect of advancement, he possessed, independent of any one, eight hundred per annum, which, with the fortune that Lord Grange had promised to his daughter, would be quite sufficient to maintain them in respectability. And he urged, that after their long engage-

ment, and deep attachment to each other, neither could ever forget, or form any other union with a prospect of happiness.

In the meantime, Henry Dillon had not failed to gain information of the progress of his work. He had diligently read that part of the newspapers which usually contains the record of marriages amongst persons who pretend to station and respectability; and every day, when he turned his eye thither, his heart had beat with a feeling of apprehension which he had never felt on any other occasion, dreading that he should see the marriage of Charles Neville with Lucy Grange; fearing that one drop of happiness should be poured into that cup which he had determined to render bitter. With a heated cheek, and a triumphant smile, he at length saw a somewhat sneering announcement, that the apprehended marriage had not taken place; and oh! with what exultation did he read, that Sir William Neville had died, leaving the whole of his property to his sister's second son, a midshipman in the navy, whom he had never twice beheld in his life. It was all gratification to him—it was all triumph! But the cup which he was draining so eagerly,—the cup by which he was destroying his immortal soul, was like that wherewith the drunkard destroys the mortal body. Each draught did but increase the thirst, which it was drained at first to allay; and the fiery burning of his heart for more was but aggravated by that which was employed to quench it.

Dillon had found out the hotel at which Captain Neville had resided while in London, and he had taken means to ascertain the moment of his return. When he learned, however, that he had actually arrived, there was a struggle in his heart,—a strife between the eager impetuosity of his desires, and the dark, deliberate purpose of giving those desires their utmost gratification. He had determined to see Charles Neville; not only that he might, in person, witness

his sufferings, but that he might goad him on along the road to destruction. And yet, when the moment came that he was to put this resolve into execution, he felt doubtful of himself: he felt that, with all the mastery which he had acquired over his demeanour, it would be scarcely possible for him to shroud within his own bosom the revengeful hatred, the first promptings of which were, to slay his enemy where-soever he found him. He paused, and revolved the whole in his own mind. But he saw a new triumph, even in the very conquest of himself. He felt, that it would double the pleasure to plant the blow with his own hand, and stir the dagger in the wound: and he muttered between his teeth, as he concluded,—“Yes, I will go to him—I will condole with him—I will befriend him; and try whether he will not be idiot enough to forget how he has injured me, or to think that I am fool enough not to see and know it.”

He went, accordingly; asked for Captain Neville, and was admitted. But he paused a moment at the foot of the stairs, to recollect all his determinations, to calm down every agitation, and to discipline the dark passions of his soul in order to win the complete victory for which he panted. Then, with a calm, deliberate step, he mounted the staircase, and entered the room in which Charles Neville sat. He could scarcely restrain the grim, satisfied smile, which convulsed his lip even as he repressed it, on beholding the altered appearance of him he hated:—the ruddy cheek, turned pale; the eye, grown haggard and anxious; the once firm and resolute lip, quivering with the quick passing of many painful emotions. There was a certain degree of negligence, too, about the dress, which spoke strongly of pain, and disappointment, and anxiety, and distress; and, for the first time, Dillon tasted deeply the sweets of revenge, and was resolved not to set down the cup till it was drained to the last drop.

Charles Neville rose, and grasped his hand warmly. "This is very kind of you, Dillon," he said; "very kind of you, indeed!"

"Not at all, my dear Neville," replied Dillon, calmly; "I heard that you had been suffering, like myself, from the caprice of that old man, Lord Grange: and I thought that no one was better calculated to console you, than one who had undergone the same, and had at length shaken off the effect."

A long conversation ensued; which ended in Dillon giving his advice in regard to Charles Neville's future conduct. "You have but two things to do," he said. "At least, were I in your situation, such would be my behaviour. This old man promised you his daughter, and encouraged your addresses to her, without making any stipulation concerning your uncle's fortune. Are you, and the beautiful girl you love, to suffer through your whole lives for his injustice? There is no man on earth who will not think you perfectly justified in marrying without his consent, if he now withdraws it. My case is very different; for though he at one time sanctioned my addresses to your fair Lucy's sister, he withdrew his approbation ere I had time to win her regard: but with you the matter is straightforward; and if you do not pursue your suit to Lucy Grange herself, without at all heeding her father, you sacrifice her happiness as well as your own. A thousand to one, after all is over, the old man is reconciled to you in a month, and gives his second daughter the same sum that he bestows upon her elder sister."

"I care little about that," replied Charles Neville; "except in one point of view, and that is, the dread of exposing my beloved girl to those privations and petty inconveniences to which she has never been subjected."

"Does she love you?" demanded Dillon, with emphasis.

"I trust so," answered Neville. "Nay, I am sure she does."

“Then, fear not !” replied his companion. “She will thank you more deeply for making her taste those inconveniences, than if you had seated her on a throne. But I was going to meet your objection in another way. The second object which you ought to have in view, after having secured your union with your fair bride, is to increase your fortune. Thousands of men who attain affluence—nay, the height of fortune, set out in life with not the hundredth part of that which you possess. Indeed, what you have already, properly placed, would produce double that which you now receive : I have myself more than doubled my income within the last two years ; and as soon as ever I find anything that is perfectly safe for investing your money to greater advantage, I will let you know ; but I will propose nothing to you on which I am not willing to risk a much larger sum myself. And, in the mean time, if I can aid you in obtaining your fair Lucy, command me ! I am ready to serve you, hand and heart !”

Neville believed him ; for he was one of those who, though he had mingled much with the world, had known but little of its deceptions ; his own heart was the pure diamond, the lustre of which might be dimmed for a moment, but could not be permanently sullied ; and, in the military career through which he had passed, he had made acquaintance with high and noble deeds. He had witnessed, too, many a dark act of blood and cruelty, beyond his power to prevent or remedy ; but he had been very little accustomed to scrutinise or contend with that peculiar kind of treachery which, as in the present instance, clothes the most deadly and envenomed enmity in the fair and glossy robe of friendship. He believed him ! and gave himself up to his guidance, not blindly, not foolishly ; for any apparent deceit, any proposal of a doubtful or dishonourable nature, would either have opened his eyes at once, or excited suspicions which might have proved his safeguard.

But he admitted that Lucy Grange was his by right, that they were bound to one another by every vow which could unite two hearts together, except the last at the altar; and that Lord Grange had no title to withdraw his consent at such a moment, and for such a cause. Love, too,—intense, ardent love!—pleaded eloquently for the course which Dillon suggested. He took means to follow it. There was but one voice spoke up in Lucy Grange's heart—it was that of love; and that voice persuaded her, first, that her father would soon forgive one disobedient act—the first of her whole life,—and next, that let the worst happen which could happen, poverty and privation with Charles Neville was a thousand times preferable to wealth and splendour without him. She was easily persuaded; and quitting her paternal home, she became the bride of him she loved, though no flowers strewn their pathway to the altar, and no merry bells rang out a gratulating peal for the marriage of Lord Grange's daughter.

As usual, under such circumstances, the marriage was performed first in Scotland and next in London; and, on the latter occasion, Henry Dillon accompanied Charles Neville to the altar. Strange and terrible was the feeling of joy with which he witnessed every act which hurried on the fate that he meditated for his victim. Strange and terrible was the satisfaction which he felt in witnessing the temporary happiness that shone in Charles Neville's eyes, and shewed him what an engine the deep strong love which reigned in his bosom might be made, to work his misery in after days. He felt, as he saw their hands united at the altar, as if he had thrown a chain for ever round the man he hated. Imagination ran on into the future, and with minute accuracy depicted all the misery and wretchedness he might find means to inflict; all the dark and painful scenes through which he might follow out his revenge. And, as he strode back from the altar to

the vestry, following, like the fiend in Paradise, the path of two pure and happy beings, he felt as if every footstep were planted, crushing, upon the heart of Charles Neville.

The anticipation, even, was enough to satisfy him for several days ; but as soon as ever he could do so with propriety, he called upon his victim, at a small house which he had taken for his bride, at a short distance from London. The scene itself was a pleasant one to his eye. He saw Charles Neville and Lucy Grange living in a style so different to that in which they were accustomed, that he knew the time would come, when Neville would find continual sources of pain and discomfort in the privations to which he would see Lucy exposed. Still, however, they had all the necessities, if not all the luxuries of life ; and Dillon began to think they looked too happy, and to grow impatient for the quicker progress of the misery he schemed.

Two days after, Charles Neville received a note, informing him that Dillon had found an opportunity of investing a large sum, in fact, to any amount he chose, in a speculation which *must* prove successful ; the present interest was to be *only* seven per cent, but it was supposed that, at the end of two years, a bonus would be obtained of at least five-and-twenty per cent more.

Neville immediately hastened to town and had an interview with the projector at the house of his pretended friend. The scheme was one of the many plausible schemes by which thousands have been ruined. Neville had some hesitation—some apprehension, indeed ; and he said he would take a day to consider of the matter, making an appointment with the projector, at the house of Dillon, for the next morning. Henry Dillon's brow became clouded, even at the delay ; but he could not oppose it ; and he declared that he also would wait till Captain Neville had decided.

When Neville returned home, he found his fair and beautiful bride sitting with a letter in her hand, gazing fixedly upon it, with a look of deep melancholy ; the first sad expression he had seen upon her countenance since she became his wife. Her left hand had fallen listlessly by her side ; the right, which held the paper, rested on her knee, and with her head slightly bent, and the sunny ringlets of her chestnut hair falling forward on her soft blooming cheek, she kept her eyes still bent, as I have said, upon the letter, though it was evident enough that she had long before read its contents. She had never looked lovelier ; she had never been dearer ; and throwing his arms round her, her husband tenderly inquired what was the matter ?

As a reply, she put the letter into his hands ; when he found it was one from her father, refusing either to pardon or to see her. The momentary grief passed by ; hope still raised her voice ; and as the evening went on, Lucy and her husband regained their cheerfulness ; but still, when Charles Neville looked round at the cottage in which they dwelt, when his eye fell upon the cards of several noble friends and relations who had called upon his wife since their marriage, he experienced more anxiety than he had done before, lest Lucy should feel the privations of her situation. He thought, as the evening passed, of the tempting offer which had been made him. At one blow he would add two-thirds to his income ; the carriage, which circumstances obliged them to deny themselves, might then be kept without any extravagance or risk ; and Lucy might appear once more in those circles where her sweetness of disposition and high qualities of mind and heart had made her loved by all the good, the noble, and the wise.

With such feelings, he went to keep his appointment at the house of Henry Dillon. The projector there shewed him a list of those who had taken shares in the speculation, and

he found amongst them the names of all the richest, and many of the cleverest mercantile men of the day. He thought there could be no risk; Henry Dillon assured him there could be none, and declared that, leaving it open to him to take what shares he liked, he would himself purchase all that remained. Neville hesitated no longer, and invested all but a mere pittance in the speculation which was proposed to him. Dillon also took shares to the amount of 50,000*l.*, and Neville went home perfectly satisfied, trusting that he had now a fair prospect of placing his beloved wife in a better situation. The speculation seemed likely in every respect to be successful; and though, at first, Lucy had looked grave, yet when she found that, a month after the whole had been arranged, her husband had been offered a considerable premium for his shares, she too was satisfied. The result of that satisfaction was, that herself and her husband, who had set out with the most careful economy, began to think they might indulge in some little extraordinary expenses. Lucy Grange appeared as a bride in society, was courted and esteemed; one invitation, which could not well be refused, was succeeded by another, and the approaching dividend was calculated upon to meet the expenses of the moment. Charles Neville looked in the lovely face of his young wife, and saw that she was happy, and he also gave himself fully up to the joy of possessing her, and of seeing her contented with her situation.

The first thing that woke him from his dream, was to hear that the shares of the speculation in which he had taken a part, had suffered a fall in value; and he instantly hurried to Dillon's house to ask what he ought to do? Dillon, he found, had gone down to his seat in Northumberland, and he instantly wrote to him, informing him of the facts, and asking his opinion. While he waited with impatience, rumour upon rumour agitated and alarmed him; but he resolved not to

act without his friend ; he thought it would be dishonourable to do so, at least before Dillon could answer. The answer came by return of post. It was as kind as words could make it ; expressing, however, great apprehensions of the result, and bidding Neville consult with his agent, in whose hands, Henry Dillon said, he had left the absolute management of all his affairs.

Charles Neville flew instantly to the house of the man of business, and informed him what was the object of his coming ; the man stared at him with surprise : " Lord bless you, sir," he said, " I sold out all Mr. Dillon's shares two days ago, and that was at a loss of nearly ten thousand pounds. Since then, the thing has gone down like a waterfall, and I doubt, by this time, the bubble's burst."

In an agony of mind, such as few can conceive, Neville flew to the Stock Exchange, and found that the bubble had burst indeed ! His shares were not worth a sixpence ; and all that he had on earth was his captain's pay and a few hundred pounds. The agony of his mind, at the moment when this news met his ear, was keen and poignant beyond all expression, and was well calculated to gratify to the utmost the hatred of his most bitter enemy. It did gratify that enemy in a degree, that none who have not felt the delight of satisfied revenge can know. After the letter of his agent had reached him, shewing him that all his schemes were successful, though at the cost of several thousand pounds, Dillon sat in his high and lordly hall, gazing upon the pictures of his ancestors, and stimulating himself to the full enjoyment of his accomplished vengeance, by dwelling bitterly on the offence. " Yes," he said to himself as he gazed around, " yes, I am an illegitimate child ; there is a bar between me and all these noble men who passed through life within these walls. The purchase of the dwelling, and

the land, and the riches, could not give me the birth, could bestow on me no true title to call them my ancestors ! It is all true ! He said nothing but the truth ; but, nevertheless, he shall be rewarded sufficiently. If I am a bastard, he is a beggar !” And gazing forth upon vacancy, with a well-satisfied smile, he pictured to himself all the minute points of the misery he had caused ; he saw in the glass of imagination the despair of Charles Neville, the wretchedness of Lucy, the evils of penury coming quick upon them ; all the petty wants, and cares, and sorrows of poverty ; the high-minded and the generous hearts reduced to the calculation of sixpences ; the comparison between past affluence and present need ; and there was not one single spot in the dark picture of their fate on which his eye did not rest with pleasure.

Yet, it was not enough ; his revenge knew no satiety ; he eagerly asked his own heart, “ What next ?” and for a moment, he thought with satisfaction of going at once to London, and giving his victim intimation that his ruin had been designed, and why. His gratification could not be complete, he felt, unless Charles Neville knew whose was the hand that dealt the blow. “ When he does know it,” Dillon thought, “ he will assuredly call me out, and then I may have my revenge indeed ! I may have the pleasure of punishing him sufficiently, and seeing how he will meet death, with the knowledge that he is leaving his wife to beggary and starvation.”

But as he thus thought, he paused, and saw that there were yet two or three steps to be taken which might add two or three grades of misery more to those which he had already piled upon the head of him he hated. “ I know Charles Neville well,” he thought, “ and he can never be truly wretched so long as he has honour and love to support him ; I must bring upon him disgrace ; I must deprive him of the

consolation of her affection, and then—and then he shall quit the world, if he so pleases.”

His plan had never been completely formed; for his purposes and their accomplishment increased step by step, and he remained one day longer in the country in order to trace out his scheme more completely. He then hastened to London, and his first visit was to the house on which he had brought calamity. The faces of Charles and Lucy Neville expressed all that he could have wished. Corroding care, the searing and withering touch of sudden and unexpected misfortune, the haggard eye of anxious and painful expectation, all were there, shewing him how his vengeance worked. When he arrived, there was with them a little man, much older in appearance than in reality, whom Neville introduced to him as their mutual schoolfellow, Mr. Graham, now a solicitor. And, for a time, Dillon imagined that he might have come to press the bankrupt Neville in regard to some debt: but he soon learnt that Graham's object had been to offer his services to Neville in arranging his affairs; and he discovered, also, that the little lawyer was an old acquaintance of Mrs. Neville's. From that moment, Dillon treated him with a degree of haughtiness which soon induced him to take his hat and depart. Graham paused a moment after the door was shut upon him, as if doubtful whether he should not turn back to say something more; but the moment after, he walked on again, and Dillon proceeded to condole with Neville on the terrible loss they had mutually sustained.

“There is but one way of retrieving, Neville,” he said, as soon as Lucy had left them; “and by that means, I understand from my agent, you may speedily recover a large part of that which you have lost, by the risk of a mere insignificant sum.”

"But I have no sum to risk, Dillon," replied Neville: "I am utterly ruined; I cannot command three hundred pounds at this moment."

"But I can," replied Dillon, assuming a frank tone; "but I can: and while I have the means, you may command them."

He then went on to explain to his victim, that, in those fluctuating times, large fortunes might be made by speculations in the funds; and he offered to advance for his friend five thousand pounds, to enable him to pursue that species of gambling. The mind of Charles Neville, however, revolted from the very thought. He pointed out, that he knew nothing of such transactions; and he expressed his determination of retiring with Lucy into some remote part of the country, and living upon the little that they had, till a renewal of the war called him again into active service. Dillon, however, adhered to his advice, and pursued it by a thousand arguments. As to carrying on the business at the Stock Exchange, he said, neither of them could, of course, do that; but his agent would manage the whole, under their direction. He himself possessed means of obtaining secret information, he declared, which would enable them to take advantage of the fluctuations of the market. And, to put his friend's mind quite at ease, he said he would advance the five thousand pounds upon condition of its being repaid to him, if they were successful, within a certain time; but if not, the debt to be cancelled altogether.

Neville's sense of honour would not, of course, permit him to take advantage of this proposal; but it had the effect which Dillon intended. It induced him to listen to his pretended friend's scheme, and ultimately to take part in it, borrowing absolutely the five thousand pounds. He declared, however, that he was perfectly incompetent to manage the transaction;

and Dillon, willingly on his part, undertook to arrange the whole. A number of meetings and conferences were necessary ; and, on several of those occasions, Dillon found the same Mr. Graham at the house of Captain Neville. The presence of the little lawyer displeased him, and he treated him with a degree of haughty rudeness, which, though the man of law bore it with all patience, called a remonstrance from Neville himself.

"I have my reasons !" replied Dillon, abruptly ; and that very reply, though spoken on the spur of the moment, suggested to his mind a scheme for consummating the last act of his revenge.

When all was completed, an interval occurred, during which Charles Neville heard little or nothing of the further proceedings of his friend, and his time passed in very anxious expectation ; whilst several of his creditors, judging from his altered style of living that he was a fallen man, with the ordinary charity of the human race, pressed eagerly for payment. At length, one day his friend informed him, that there was to be a meeting at his house in the country, about thirty miles from London, of various influential persons, one of whom, he thought, was likely to obtain for Neville one of those appointments on the staff at home, which would put him, for the time, at ease. He invited him, therefore, warmly to come down, with his wife ; adding, that as there was to be a fancy ball in the evening, he had better bring his regimental uniform.

Lucy refused to go, but insisted upon her husband's doing so ; and the day passed over with Charles Neville in the happiness of renewed hope, for the personage to whom Dillon had alluded, who was well aware of the young officer's high talents in his profession, took much notice of him during the whole day, conversed with him over his future prospects,

and taught him to expect assistance and support. Twice, during the course of that day, however, Neville caught the eye of Dillon resting upon him with an expression which startled and surprised him. But it created no suspicion ; for how could he suspect a man who shewed nothing but the strongest desire to aid and befriend him ? The ball, which followed, was as splendid as wealth and taste could make it ; and the amusements were protracted almost till daylight.

The morning, in fact, was grey in the sky, when one of the servants sought out Captain Neville, and placed a note in his hand, which, he said, had been brought, that moment, by a messenger in great haste from London. It was written in a strange hand, but purported to come from a physician, and went to inform him that his wife had been taken suddenly ill in the night, and that, if he wished to see her alive, he must hasten back with all speed. Neville's cheek turned deadly pale at the news ; and Dillon, who was standing near, demanded eagerly what was the matter. As soon as he was told, he insisted upon horses being sent for ; and Charles Neville, in an agony of mind, posted back to London, passing through the city in his way to his own dwelling. The postilion stopped once near the Mansion House, on account of something that had gone wrong with his horses ; and Neville remarked, that several people came up and asked what was the matter. A servant of Dillon's, who had come to town with the carriage by his master's orders, made some reply, which Neville did not attend to ; but, putting his head out of the window, ordered the man to drive on as fast as possible. In this he was obeyed, and in three-quarters of an hour more he was at the door of his own house.

"How is your mistress?" was his first question to the servant who admitted him.

"Quite well, sir," replied the woman, with some appearance of surprise. He hurried into the breakfast-room; but there sat Lucy, paler, indeed, than in former days, but as well as when he had left her.

He had evidently been imposed upon; and he was conversing with his fair wife over the motives which could lead any one to practise so cruel a jest upon him, when the servant announced that a strange gentleman wished to speak with him; and Neville was arrested for a debt which he had no means of paying, and was conveyed to one of those abodes of misery which our laws assign equally to misfortune and to guilt.

The heart of Charles Neville felt as if it would have broken: but Lucy shed no tear, and uttered no murmur. On the contrary, placed by her husband's side, in the miserable vehicle which was brought to convey him to a prison, she still spoke words of hope and comfort; and, ere they reached the wretched place in which many of their future hours seemed destined to be spent, she had, by her sweet fortitude, contrived to restore her husband to some degree of calmness. By the time they had reached the lock-up house, as it was called, the bailiff had informed his prisoner, that if he could obtain bail for his appearance, he might speedily be set at liberty. He accordingly wrote immediately to his friend Dillon; but, during the whole of that day and the next morning, he received no answer.

Towards night, Dillon made his appearance. He descended from his carriage at the door, with a slow and stately air, which Neville remarked from the window; and, entering the room, looked round with a cold and supercilious smile. The first impulse of Neville was to tender his hand, but Dillon did not take it; and the blood rushed up into Captain Neville's cheek, with a feeling of indignation in his bosom which seemed to take away his breath.

"I am very sorry, sir," said Dillon—before the other had recovered himself sufficiently to speak,—“that I cannot become your bail, as you propose; but I made a vow, long ago, never to be bail for any one. You seem comfortably lodged here,” he continued in the same tone, fixing his eye upon the door into the other room, through which Lucy had retreated just as he entered.

“So comfortably lodged, sir,” replied Neville, with a quivering lip and flashing eye, “so comfortably lodged, that I have a great desire of being alone; and if you do not find your way out by the stairs, I may find a way for you by the window.”

“You forget, my good friend,” replied Dillon, calmly, “that there are bars upon the windows in your present abode.”

“Then I must hurry your departure by the door,” said Neville, advancing upon him; but at that moment Lucy darted forth from the inner room, and threw her arms round her husband. “Charles! Charles, forbear!” she exclaimed. “Mr. Dillon must either be mad, or acting under some false impression.”

“Not at all mad, madam,” replied Dillon, walking coolly towards the door, “nor acting under any wrong impression. You will, probably, console yourself and your husband by thinking the commander-in-chief mad, when you find that he has dismissed Captain Neville from His Majesty’s service; but all I have to say is this, that when an officer enters into a base conspiracy for stock-jobbing purposes, and, passing through the town in uniform, makes use of the regimentals of His Majesty’s service for the purpose of spreading false reports, to cause a fall in the funds, he can but expect one result.”

“Liar and villain!” burst forth Neville; “who knows so well as you do that every word you speak is false?”

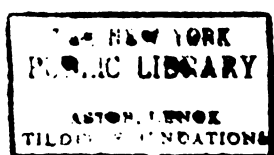
“I know them to be true, sir,” replied Dillon; “do you

143



"I do hope, my good friend," replied Willens, calmly,
*"that there are bars upon the windows in your present
 abode."*

1847



think to deceive me by the trumped-up story of a forged letter? Pray, let him go, madam! I intend to do him one honour, in memory of our former friendship, which is, if ever he get out of such walls as these, to punish him for the deceits he has practised upon me, in the manner usually employed by gentlemen; though, perhaps, the brave Captain Neville may be inclined to shrink the encounter, upon the pretence that I am not his equal, having the misfortune to be, as I doubt not he has taken full care to inform you, madam, an *illegitimate son*." As he pronounced the last words, he raised his voice, and all the demoniacal passions which he had so long nourished secretly in his bosom, flashed forth upon his dark but splendid countenance, like lightning bursting from a thunder-cloud.

Charles Neville gazed at him for a moment in stupified astonishment, scarcely able to conceive what he meant; and, before he had sufficiently recovered himself to make any inquiries, Dillon had quitted the room, and was descending the stairs towards his carriage. For several minutes after he was gone, his victim stood in the midst of that miserable chamber, with his whole senses bewildered by the variety of contending emotions which that brief interview had called up in his bosom. Rage and indignation struggled with agony and despair; but, at length, the more potent passions overcame the more fierce and evanescent ones. He saw that he was ruined; that not only in fortune was he a bankrupt, but that, by the cunning scheme of a fiendlike enemy, his honour and his reputation, too, were lost; that all was gone; everything that made life valuable, except the love of the one true devoted being, who stood gazing upon his pale and haggard countenance with the unchanged look of deep affection only rendered more intense by care, and sorrow, and anxiety.

“What does he mean?” said Lucy at length, “how have you offended him, Charles? Your ruin, depend upon it, is his doing. I have always doubted him; I have always feared that he had some evil purpose in the schemes that he suggested to you. I have seen it in the curl of his lip and the flash of his eye when you did not know that he was looking on you. But I knew not that you had ever given him any cause to hate you.”

“Nor have I, my Lucy,” replied Neville, “nor have I. But once, when we were schoolboys together, and he was ill-treating poor Graham, I divulged what I had heard while living near his father in Northumberland, that he was a natural son. I had forgotten all about it long ago, till his words just now, about his illegitimacy, brought it all back to my mind. But, let us think no more of the villain, Lucy,” he said, casting his arms around her; “let us think, my bright, my beautiful, my beloved, let us think of our present situation. Lucy, I am ruined and undone. By some villanous scheme, doubtless, of the scoundrel who has just quitted us, I am not only a beggar, but I may be made to appear, in the eyes of my friends and my profession, a criminal also. There is no chance, there is no hope left, nothing remains for Charles Neville but to lie down on yon bed, and die! Lucy,” he added, holding her at a little distance from him, and gazing earnestly in her face; “Lucy, I madly took you from a happy home to bring you to misery, to want, and to disgrace! Blessings on you, dear girl! smile not so, and shake your head; it is but too true. Not yet three months have you been my wife, and what must I now do?—I must send you back again to the home from which I took you. Go, my Lucy, go! Cast yourself at your father’s feet, implore his forgiveness; tell him, that never yet was filial disobedience so

severely punished ; beseech him to take you again to his bosom, and only to let you recall Charles Neville when death shall have ended his being and his misery."

Lucy again smiled, and shook her head. "No, Charles," she said, "no! If no earthly thing could have torn me from you in prosperity, adversity but links my fate to yours more firmly. I can die with you, Charles, but never leave you. And yet," she continued, while a bright light came up into her beautiful eyes, "and yet I will leave you—yet I will go to my father! But it shall not be to plead for myself: it shall be to plead for Charles Neville. Nay, hear me, Charles! look not so hopeless. I, too, might hope little from my father's affection when his pride is offended; but I build my hopes upon his pride. I will beseech him to come forth and support us in our hour of necessity; I will beseech him not to let Lord Grange's daughter starve in prison; I will beseech him not to let Lord Grange's son-in-law be condemned unheard! Nay, Charles, I know what you would say; that life, wealth, every thing, are nothing worth without honour: but, Charles, your honour is pure, and it behoves you to make every exertion to defend it! Charles, you must not, you dare not talk of dying," she continued, with all the fire of a noble enthusiastic spirit flashing from her countenance. "Charles, you must not, you dare not talk of dying, while an unjust stain remains upon your name. Nay, nay," she continued, "trust to my schemes now, trust to your Lucy, and I doubt not, ere two days be over, to bring you some comfort. At all events, Charles, I think I can make your honour and integrity apparent; for something—a presentiment it must have been—made me keep that bad man, Dillon's, letter of invitation to you, in which you are expressly requested to come in your uniform. With it, too, is the letter which caused you to hurry so suddenly back; and I have a suspicion that,

though the latter is written in a feigned hand, yet minute examination might prove they both came from the same person."

The words of Lucy came to Charles Neville like a gleam of light to a benighted and tempest-beaten traveller. He consented at once that she should go, and divided with her the small sum that they had left, in order to put her plan into execution.

"In two days' time, Charles," she said, "I will be back again; and you promise me, by all the mutual love that we bear each other, not to give way in any degree to despair till you see me again?"

"I will do my best, Lucy," he replied; "I will do my best. Sweet, beloved girl, who would not struggle on for life and hope, with the love of such a being as you are to light them on their way?"

They parted; and for a short time—a very short time—the hopes which Lucy's words had inspired, continued to give a degree of comfort to Charles Neville; but, as the hours went by, and he sat in solitude and in silence in the low and wretched room, with its barred windows and smoky walls, without any occupation but his own sad thoughts, the gloom deepened round him; more and more painful became his imaginings; every picture of misery and distress that fancy could conjure up thronged the apartment; and could the eye of Henry Dillon have seen him at that moment, with the anguish that wrung his heart traced in distinct lines upon his countenance, he surely would have felt that vengeance had done enough. But he had prepared yet more. As he had gone on, his appetite for the same inebriating draught had been increased; the caution with which he had set out, too, had been abandoned. Instead of wishing to conceal his purposes and their motive, he now desired that Charles Neville should know that it was his hand that had struck the blow,

and what had called it down. He had taken means to learn, as far as possible, all that had occurred in the house where Neville was confined. Nobody passed in and out without being watched by his agents; all the servants of the house were bribed to tell all that passed. Like every passion, pampered to a certain degree, revenge had become his master instead of his slave, and was growing into a reckless and frenzied state of excitement, to which the sight of Charles Neville, suffering under his lash, had but contributed fresh fire and eagerness.

In the meanwhile, Neville remained watching the heavy hours, and counting every minute as it flew, in hopes of Lucy's return. The second day went by, and Charles Neville watched the sound of every carriage that came near, listened for the opening door, marked each step upon the stair; but still Lucy came not, and the day went down into night. At length the heavy footfall of the bailiff was heard ascending towards his chamber, and the man entered, and put a note into his hand.

"There, sir," he said, "the debt is paid; and if I might advise you, you'd take yourself off as fast as possible; for, as far as I can hear, you are likely to get into a worse place than this."

Neville gazed upon the man in some surprise; but he saw the handwriting of Henry Dillon upon the note, and tore it open before he answered. The writing was steady and clear; but to Neville, who knew nothing or but little of all that had been passing in Dillon's mind, the style seemed that of a madman.

"I have paid your debt, sir," so it ran, "and have set you free; but neither from regard towards you, nor consideration of your happiness. When you took the pains of informing Lord Grange that I was an illegitimate son, and

thus broke off my proposed marriage with your fair wife's sister, you, perhaps, did me a favour ; at least, if her conduct had proved in the end the same as that of your admirable lady. My purpose in freeing you from the durance of which she is taking advantage, is to give you an opportunity of satisfying yourself with your own eyes as to what is her conduct ; and to shew you that, while you imagine her safe at her father's seat, she is passing her time with your excellent companion, Mr. Graham, who has been, I understand, the kind friend of her youth. To conclude all matters existing between us, I have only further to say, that if you still consider yourself injured by me, as you expressed yourself when last we met, I am willing immediately to wave all consideration of the disgraceful position in which you stand with society, and afford you the same satisfaction which I would give to a man of honour."

In the mad eagerness of his thirst for revenge, Dillon had overshot the mark : up to this point he had found means of wringing and torturing the heart of his victim ; but, in regard to Lucy, love rendered that heart invulnerable. No look of doubt, no expression of suspicion, followed the perusal of that letter ; a calm proud smile of thorough scorn was all that it produced.

"He is a fool as well as villain," muttered Neville, "and he has now exposed to me the whole of his base and ungenerous conduct ; but I will go to Graham himself, and lay the letter before him. Had I followed his advice, and accepted his assistance, I should have escaped from the fangs of this viper, against whom he warned me long ago. Let all the few things I have here," he continued, turning to the bailiff, "be carried to my house ; and if Mrs. Neville comes to-night, inform her that I have returned home. Now, what have I to pay you?"

The exorbitant fees were soon discharged ; and Neville

set out on foot, taking his way first to the chambers of the young lawyer, Mr. Graham. The servant who came to the door informed him that Mr. Graham was very busy, and had given orders to be disturbed for no one. Did a doubt arise in the mind of Charles Neville?—No! not a shadow. “Give your master that card,” he said; “and tell him, that a gentleman wishes to speak with him for a few minutes. I will wait here.”

The servant left him at the door; and, proceeding along the passage, entered a room beyond. A moment after the voice of Mr. Graham was heard speaking, and then an exclamation in a tone which made Neville’s heart beat high. It was the voice of his wife, and Neville gazed forward along the passage. The instant after the half-open door was thrown wide, and Lucy, darting forth, cast herself into her husband’s arms.

“Oh, Charles!” she exclaimed, “I shall not easily forgive the person who has anticipated me in setting you free: ten minutes more would have brought me to you.” Lucy had been followed, more slowly, by Mr. Graham, who grasped Neville’s hand warmly, and, with a look of satisfaction which admitted no mistake,—“We are too late,” he said, “we are too late! And yet, I trust that we have some happy news in store, which you have not yet heard. But, let us come into this other room, Neville, for there are too many people in there:” and he pointed to the room from which he and Mrs. Neville had come.

“Do I know them?” said Neville.

“All of them, but my clerk, I believe,” replied Graham. “There is my good Lord Grange, and your fair sister-in-law, and Sir John Stanmore.”

“I had better meet them all at once,” replied Neville; “I have been betrayed by a villain, and I have the proof

of his villany under his own hand. But I have done nothing that should make me ashamed or afraid to meet any man on earth. Read that, Graham ;” and he put Henry Dillon’s letter into his friend’s hand.

“Come, Charles ! come, then !” said Lucy : “not only our fortunes, but my father’s ideas, are very much changed since I left you.”

At that moment Lord Grange appeared at the door, and welcomed Charles Neville as his son, adding a few words of dignified rebuke for his stolen marriage ; but it was reserved for another to explain what had caused so complete a change in the worthy nobleman’s views. It was neither the tears nor the persuasions of Lucy, for she had not seen her father till that night. From the place where her husband was confined she had gone to the house of Mr. Graham—who was her father’s agent, it must be remembered—for the purpose of beseeching him to take steps to clear her husband’s honour of the imputation cast upon it, while she hurried down to her father’s seat, in order to entreat his forgiveness and protection. She found, however, that Mr. Graham had lately married a lady considerably older than himself, who had been her own governess ; and that he was upon the very eve of setting out for the country house of Lord Grange ; sent for thither, it appeared, on business of great importance. He besought Lucy to intrust the advocacy of her cause with her father to him, and to remain with his wife, whom she both loved and revered, doing what she could herself in London to clear her husband’s character of all imputation during his absence.

Lucy had lost no time, and bursting forth in a new character, had shewn that however sweet and gentle in moments where nothing was required at her hands but soothing kindness or calm fortitude, she possessed powers and energies of

a more commanding kind, ever ready to act in the service of those she loved. She had in person proceeded to the commander-in-chief; she had obtained an audience of him; she had persuaded him to investigate all accusations against her husband far more fully than he had done; and in a second audience which she obtained, she proved to him, both from the two letters which she had kept, and from the information given by one of Dillon's servants, who had accompanied her husband to town, that he was perfectly innocent of all share in the transaction in which he had been represented to be the principal actor. She left her husband's character cleared beyond a doubt; but the servant, who had been sent for by the commander-in-chief to elucidate the business in regard to Neville, conveyed to his master, Dillon, full information of the efforts which Lucy was making, and of the place of her temporary abode.

Dillon had instantly taken advantage of these tidings to serve for his own purpose, as we have already seen; but in the meanwhile Mr. Graham himself had proceeded to the seat of Lord Grange, and had found him at the very moment of his arrival in conference with Sir John Stanmore. That gentleman was in deep mourning, but not for Sir William Neville; it was for his own second son, to whom Sir William had left the whole of his property. That son had died on his passage home from India, where he had been with the fleet under Admiral ———. And as his death had taken place exactly one day previous to that of Sir William Neville, the will which the latter had made in his favour was of no effect, and the whole property fell to the heir-at-law. The heir-at-law was Charles Neville; and Sir John Stanmore, knowing that he had married one of Lord Grange's daughters, had come over instantly to inquire where he was to be found, and to enter into the arrangements which were the necessary results of such an occurrence.

Thus the news which met Charles Neville on all sides was joyful ; and he saw himself at once restored to fortune and to honour. Many explanations ensued ; and in the course of them Sir John Stanmore was made acquainted with the facts regarding Henry Dillon. He seemed struck and surprised ; and then communicated to Captain Neville so much of what had taken place between Dillon and Sir William Neville (which he had learned from the old valet of the latter,) as fully to expose the first step of that systematic revenge of which Neville had been made the victim.

Mr. Graham in the meantime had retained the letter which Dillon had that night sent to Neville, observing with a dry smile, when Neville asked him to shew it to Sir John Stanmore, "That as there were a great many charges against himself in it, and a lawyer had always enough of that kind of thing to bear, he begged leave not to make it more public than necessary." Thus ended in smiles, amongst the family of Lord Grange, that which might have ended in tears. But we must change the scene, and pursue to its conclusion our history, as far as it relates to the principal person concerned.

On the morning which followed the day the passing of which we have just described, Henry Dillon sat down to breakfast about nine o'clock. Splendour surrounded him on every side ; luxury was apparent in all the arrangements of his house and table : but his countenance, once so strikingly handsome, was now seamed and channelled by many a premature furrow—the dark characters with which violent passions brand the badge of servitude upon those who become their slaves.

A number of newspapers were scattered on the table, but for some time he took none of them up ; and while he mechanically poured his coffee into his cup, his eye was fixed with an intense but sightless gaze upon the dusty trees in the square before his house, and his mind tried hard to conjure

up a picture of all the misery which Charles Neville had suffered during the night before. Whether it was that he felt that his plans had not been calculated with their usual cunning, or whether it was that the news of Lucy's successful efforts with the commander-in-chief shewed him that his power of inflicting evil was failing, or whether his overstrained mind was no longer fully under his own control,—fancy, for the first time, refused to fill up the dark outline of the scene on which he would fain have gazed ; and he felt that he had done all on earth to render his victim wretched, without, perhaps, having effected his purpose.

To relieve his mind, which he felt to be wandering somewhat unsteadily, he was trying to direct his thoughts to something else, when a loud knock at the street door announced a coming visitor ; and he took up one of the newspapers to conceal the wandering and abstracted state of his ideas—thinking, as he did so, “Some fool upon parliamentary business, I suppose, who will go and report that I am mad, if he finds me staring out of the window in this way.” The first paragraph his eye lighted upon concerned himself and Captain Neville ; and before the servant had announced that a strange gentleman wished to speak with him, and had shewn him in, Dillon had gathered that a true statement of many parts of his conduct was already before the public. The stranger was a military man, whom Dillon had never seen before ; and he instantly exclaimed, with a smile of satisfaction, “You come from Captain Neville, I suppose?”

“No, sir,” replied the stranger, “I come from Mr. Graham, who has charged me to deliver you this note, and to bear him your answer.”

“From Mr. Graham ! from Mr. Graham !” exclaimed Dillon ; and, tearing open the letter, he read as follows :—

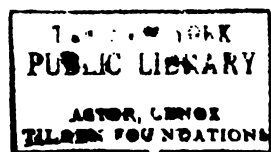
“Sir,—When I saw Captain Neville last night, upon his

having succeeded to the property of his late uncle, Sir William Neville, in default of Lieutenant William Neville Stanmore, who died at sea on the twenty-fourth of March last past, your letter of last night to Captain Neville was put into my hands. In consequence, I beg leave to inform you, that it was not Captain Neville, but myself, who informed my client, Lord Grange, of the illegitimacy of your birth ; which I was not only justified in doing, but bound to do. Your letter goes on to insult me in a manner which, of course, you do not expect me to pass over unnoticed, and therefore I have to demand immediate satisfaction, of that kind which one gentleman owes to another. I have the honour of informing you, at the same time, that measures have been taken for exposing completely your conduct towards Captain Neville ; but of course that matter is perfectly distinct from the language you have thought proper to use towards myself, and I trust that there may be no delay in making the necessary arrangements for our meeting."

Dillon read the letter, and put his hand twice to his temples. Then rising, he bowed his head to the stranger, saying, "You shall have an answer immediately;" and quitted the room.

Mr. Graham's friend took up the newspaper, and read for about five minutes, when he was startled by the loud ringing report of a pistol-shot. It was immediately succeeded by the sound of people running about; and, perceiving that something was the matter, he opened the door of the breakfast-room, and went out into the hall. Opposite was the open door of a splendid library: several servants were to be seen within; and, advancing into the midst of them, the stranger found Henry Dillon lying on the floor, and weltering in the blood shed by his own hand.

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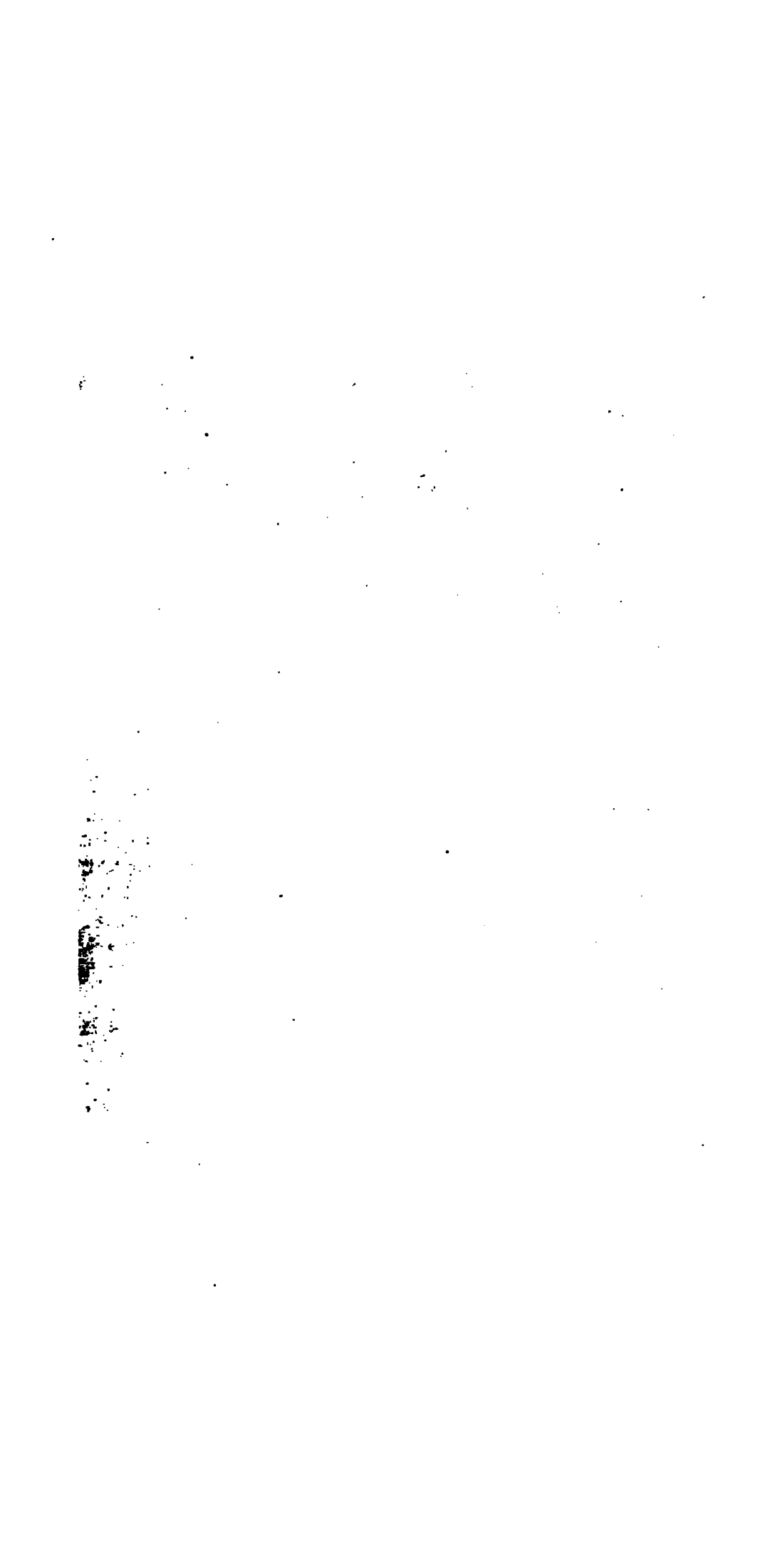




J. Corbould.

R. H. S. 1510.

Blanche of Navarre



LOVE.

THERE was pageant and revelry in the city of Pampeluna. There was splendour and glitter in the court, and the streets, and the churches. The air resounded with acclamations; the porches and porticoes were thronged with a merry population, in their holiday array; and the buzz of many voices, in eager conversation, rose above the crowd that swayed hither and thither, in the squares and open spaces. The bells of all the churches rang out; and eye and ear were told, by every sight and every sound, that it was a high festival in the ancient capital of Navarre.

To the monarch of that small mountain state, the ambassadors from France led, on that day, a beautiful and long-sought bride; and every eye, in court and city, raised the eager lid to gaze upon the future queen as she advanced. Every eye, in court and city, however, after having gazed on the proud beauty, and marked the features which might well become a prince's bride, turned with feelings of deeper satisfaction to the countenance of their own native princess; and found in its calm bright sweetness a loveliness more harmonious to their hearts,—a beauty of gentler promises and more endearing aspect.

“Handsome indeed she is!” exclaimed every one who gazed on Isabel of Valois; “handsome indeed she is; but not so beautiful as our own princess.”

With equal interest, but very different feelings, Blanche

of Navarre also gazed upon her brother's bride, as Isabel advanced through the halls of that palace where Blanche herself had so long dwelt, the first woman in the land. But with no envious thought did she thus gaze,—with no feeling of malice towards her who was destined at once to take upon herself the first place in that realm. But it was with feelings of keen, intense anxiety for a brother's happiness; with thoughts, too, of some apprehension for her own future fate. Blanche of Navarre was no longer to rule in the house of her ancestors; her word was no longer to be law amongst the courtiers of her brother; her will was no longer to be the only guide of all her actions; her fate, her time, her comfort, were no longer to be decided by her own voice: for into the halls of her infancy had come a being, upon whose will the happiness of almost every moment must depend; upon whose virtue, tenderness, and generosity, the peace and quiet passing of her future years could alone be founded.

She gazed, then, upon the beautiful bride, and saw that she was lovely. She was willing, she was anxious, in that loveliness of feature and of form, to see the loveliness of spirit and of heart; she was willing to believe, that in that dark liquid eye shone forth the virtues of a noble race; she was willing to believe, in that arching lip was pictured the high and dignified mind within. But yet, she could not but feel that there was a flashing brightness in the glance as it roamed around, marking with unshrinking firmness each gazing face of the crowded court, and noting with quick accuracy every one of those empty ornaments and trifling embellishments, on which the calm and unoccupied spirit may rest in a moment of idleness, but which, in a moment of agitation and emotion, are, to the feeling and the sensitive heart, but as bubbles on the waves to the mariner in the tempest. She

could not but feel, that on that lovely lip sat a haughty and a scornful curl—firm, proud, determined; all unlike the quivering diffidence which Blanche had pictured to her fancy, in the timid bride seeking her strange husband's court.

No timidity, indeed, was there; and so proud was the carriage, so scornful was the air, that Blanche of Navarre, as she saw the future queen advance to meet her promised husband, felt her heart beat quick, lest she should see her brother treated with indignity by the bride whose hand had already been dearly purchased. But no! she met him with smiles, she received his welcome with grace; and Blanche's heart grew calm, in the hope that her fears misled her in her interpretation of the fair stranger's demeanour.

The first object of all attention was, of course, the princess herself; but in the train of Isabel of Valois, and amongst all the gay and glittering cavaliers of which it was composed, appeared one who, in form and feature, carriage and apparel, stood forth without compare in all the court, either of Navarre or France. Francis, count of Foix, was the name the ambassador gave him, as he introduced him to the Navarrese king; and, although the eye of Blanche had before marked with wonder, not unmixed with admiration, the appearance of that princely noble, no sooner was he named than her brow slightly contracted, her fair lip lost its smile, and she bowed with cold and stately haughtiness as he advanced and was presented to herself. The count was not abashed, but maintained himself with graceful ease; and there was something in his whole demeanour, during the festivals and ceremonies that followed, which won upon even those prepared to frown on all his actions; which dazzled where it could not blind, and gained a smile from the lip even while censure was strong at the heart.

There is a race of men who fancy that some bright and

brilliant qualities, some noble deeds, some graces of demeanour, some powers of language or of thought, some grandeur of conception or energy of action, not only compensate a life of ribald looseness, but even give a splendour and dignity to vice and crime. Such had been the character which Francis, count of Foix, had established for himself, in the world of his day. Brave to a fault ; graceful, as we have said, in person ; full of high powers abused, and talents cast away, he had devoted himself to pleasure, and, in pursuit thereof, had acknowledged no barriers, and spurned at every check. His life hitherto, young as he was, had been but a tale of moral duties violated ; of passion, excess, and licentiousness. Infidelity in love had been his boast ; the ruin of woman's peace, his pastime ; and the wine-cup and the dice, and loose companions, and wild exploits of evil, made up a history chequered only by some occasional trait of a nobler spirit—some deed of generosity, or benevolence, or courage.

So dangerous and hateful had become his name, that the monarch of his own land had willingly found an occasion to send him forth into another country ; praying devoutly, that Spanish jealousy might never suffer the wild and reckless youth to return to the court of France again. And now, in the small kingdom of Navarre, he prepared to renew the same course which had won for him so evil a reputation in his own land.

On the third night after his arrival, he sat late with several of his followers, who had accompanied him from France, and with one or two of the young Navarrese nobility, congenial in tastes and habits, but less advanced in systematic vice than the gay cavalier who had now come amongst them. They talked of pleasure, and of joy, and of excited passion ; and many a bright thought and sparkling fancy followed the cup as it circled round the table,

and gave a zest and a grace to the idle, and the loose, and the vain tales which formed the great mass of their conversation. They had drank deep, when one of the Navarrese, bowing his head over the full cup, said, with a smile—"To your next conquest, fair Count of Foix ; to your next conquest !" The others around laughed gaily, and took up the toast, bowing their heads to the count, and drinking to his next conquest. The count filled his cup, and replied, "Willingly, lords, willingly ! To Blanche of Navarre !"

The brows of the Navarrese were suddenly contracted, and they turned their flashing looks upon each other. At length, one whose renown in arms saved him from the insignificance of vice, replied boldly,—“Sir Count of Foix, we welcome thee to our land as a distinguished stranger, skilled in the arts of love and the science of pleasure, well known for noble and for knightly deeds, courteous, and gay, and liberal ; and we are willing to give all free scope to your pleasant fancies : but you know not our feelings, here in Navarre, to one whom you have just named. She is our native princess, and has grown up amongst us, under our own eyes, and amidst the love of all : smile not, sir count, for we will bear no trifling with her name. She has the love of all—of good and bad alike. But it is that pure and nobler love which to the good is natural, and which, in the bosom of the bad, plants at least one good thing. Speak not of her with one vain hope or idle expectation. Her every thought is virtue ; and the high spirit that dwells in that bright form is pure as a saint in heaven. We see all her actions—we know all her deeds. Is there sorrow—is there misfortune in the city or the land, there is Blanche of Navarre to be found, comforting, consoling, aiding. Is virtue, is honour, is noble generosity heard of, the voice of Blanche of Navarre is raised to give it praise. Is wrong committed, or injustice done, hers is the tongue

to plead for the oppressed, however mighty the oppressor ; hers the lip to call down punishment on the evil-doer, however great, however favoured, however high. Is there, on the contrary, evil or vice, in whatever glittering robes arrayed, concealed under whatever specious form, though voiced with music and garlanded with flowers, sure is it to shrink from the face of Blanche of Navarre, as the birds of night fly from the keen eye of the searching day. I say to you, Count of Foix, smile not ! Well do I know that my lip is all unfit to speak the praise of purity like hers ; but I tell thee boldly, that, although in the late plague she sat beside the dying wretch, foul and fearful in the livid horror of the pestilence, and bent her bright head over the bed of misery and of death, as well in the lowest cabin as within the palace walls, without one look of disgust or apprehension—I tell thee, she would shrink from thee and thy loose words as from toad, or adder, or any other noisome thing.”

The count’s cheek had grown flushed, his brow had contracted, and his eye had flashed ; but such angry signs had passed by ere the other had done speaking, and he was ready to wear a smile, as he answered,—“ Nevertheless, Don Ferdinand, I again say—to Blanche of Navarre ! Never was woman born that might not be conquered ; and I will either conquer her, or she shall conquer me. It is not alone for her beauty, though I own that never yet have my eyes beheld loveliness so unblemished as hers—those perfect features, which the brightest dream of the Grecian sculptor never equalled ; that calm, radiant eye, shining forth from its black lashes, like some bright, tranquil star, pouring its peaceful light through a dark summer night ; that cheek, where the ruddy hue of health, softened by delicate nurture, blooms like the bosom of a garden rose ; that splendid form, where grace and rounded softness are ennobled by princely dignity and

worthy pride—it is not alone for all this blaze of beauty, though well it might set a world again on fire ; but it is because, as thou hast truly, though not courteously declared, she has already shewn that *she would shrink from me as from some noisome thing*. For this I do say, that I will conquer her, or she shall conquer me ; and I drink again to my next conquest, Blanche of Navarre ! Ay ! well I marked her,” he continued, proceeding after a little pause, ere any of the others could reply,—“ay ! well I marked her, when the ambassador but named my name, draw down the corner of that lovely lip, and spread wide the scornful nostril ! But she knew not Francis of Foix. However, let no broils, good friends, mar our fair revelry. Here is to all our loves, past, present, and to come : may they be many as the blades of grass which shall cover us when we be dead, or the cups of wine that we drink while we are living ! Here is to all our loves, and to yours especially, Don Ferdinand de Leyda. Methought I caught a pair of bright, black eyes yesterday, in the court, following thee wheresoever thou didst turn. And,—ha ! Don Ferdinand, was I not right ?—a certain lady with a swan-like throat, robed in dark purple, and with many a gem in her hair and in her girdle ?” •

Although the brows of the Navarrese still remained somewhat contracted, harmony seemed sufficiently restored, and the revel was prolonged for many an hour. At length the guests began to separate, but the Count de Foix detained Don Ferdinand de Leyda for a moment in the vestibule ; and, when they were alone, he said,—“ Don Ferdinand, my good friend, you have this night said things which—as we know each other well and of yore—you must feel sure cannot pass by as idle wind. Let us not involve others in our quarrel ; but let us meet, with a single page on either side, when, where, and with what weapons you will.”

“To-morrow morning at daybreak,” replied Don Ferdinand, calmly, “with pointed lances and our two swords, if it so please you, count. Then, for the place, let it be down in the meadows, on the other side of the river. You know the Tafalla gate?—go forth by that: my windows look upon the road, and I will soon overtake you. With one page, you say?—Good night.” And so they parted.

The sun shone bright through the long casements of the old palace of Pampeluna, chequering with misty light the pavements of its lordly halls; and from those casements could be seen, clear and distinct, the ring of mighty mountains, with their snow-covered tops, which swept round the capital of Navarre. Between them and the city lay, basking in the morning sunshine, that beautiful basin, with its richly cultivated slopes, known in all later times by the name of the Cup of Pampeluna; and glittering as it passed the city, which it half surrounds in one of its graceful bends, flowed the sweet Arga.

Blanche of Navarre had risen early from her couch, and had watched the wandering sun pour his first light from the pinnacles of the eastern hills into that mountain cup, in the centre of which rose up her brother’s capital. She gazed from the windows in somewhat thoughtful, somewhat melancholy mood; for, in the short space of three days, she had been taught that her brother’s palace was no longer to be a happy home for her—that her brother’s bride looked not on her as a sister—and that jealousy of the power she had so willingly resigned, and envy of the love she so well merited, were the feelings that reigned in a heart which she had fondly hoped to find open to nobler and better affections. As she gazed, her eyes lighted on what she imagined to be nothing more than some grooms exercising their masters’ horses; but in a few minutes she saw them turn, and spur at full charge against each other.

Even then she thought it no more than some wild youths, as was very customary, breaking a friendly lance in the meadows below; and she only wondered that they had not chosen the ordinary tilt-yard for the scene of their exploits. At the end of about half an hour, however, she heard a number of busy feet, passing along in the neighbourhood of the chamber in which she sat, towards the apartments which had been assigned to the French ambassador and the noble gentlemen who had accompanied him, and many voices speaking in a low, quick tone. The first tidings which she obtained concerning the cause of those sounds, was from one of her own women, who ran in with an important face of wonder, exclaiming,—“ Oh, lady! do you know that the Count de Foix has been killed by Don Ferdinand de Leyda?”

“ God forbid!” replied Blanche,—“ God forbid! He was sadly unprepared to die:” and she hastened out from her own chamber to the public apartments of the palace, to ascertain the truth of her maiden’s story. The room she entered was that prepared for the morning meal of the royal household; and from some of the attendants present she learned that the count was not killed, though dangerously wounded. “ He has been carried to his chamber, lady,” replied the man, “ and the surgeons are even now busily engaged extracting the lance’s head, which has broken off in his shoulder.”

“ What has become of Don Ferdinand?” demanded Blanche. “ Is he unhurt? for I have heard that this Count of Foix is famous for his skill in such encounters.”

“ He, too, is badly wounded,” replied the man; “ but they have borne him to his own house, and he is attended by surgeons there.”

“ Thus do bad men slay each other,” said Blanche. “ Some idle dispute or licentious brawl has doubtless brought

them thus to the gates of death when they are least fitted to meet another life. God spare them this once ! and perhaps the warning of pain and sickness may not be thrown away."

While she yet spoke, her brother and his bride, with several nobles in attendance, entered the hall. At the tidings of the evil which had befallen the Count of Foix, the young monarch expressed some sorrow, in courteous tones, towards the French lords around him ; but to the judgment of Blanche of Navarre, the grief of Isabel of Valois exceeded the bounds of that commiseration which her brother's wife might well display towards the libertine noble of her own land. She vowed that, if the count died, she should hate Navarre ; she called him the flower of courtesy and knighthood ; and she declared her purpose of visiting his sick chamber. The young king bore it all with patience ; for his beautiful bride, in all her proud loveliness, had at once assumed that mastery over him which weak minds ever yield to the strong when passion raises its voice against resistance. He marvelled not at the interest she expressed ; he felt neither jealousy nor anger ; and he ventured only to suggest that his fair bride would, when she visited the wounded man, take with her his sister Blanche. Isabel heard him with a flashing eye and an angry spot upon her fair cheek, but she dared not resist his will so gently expressed ; and bowing, with a scornful smile, to Blanche, she prayed her, in ironical terms, to give her the pleasure of her fair company after the meal was over.

No scornful word ever embittered the lips of Blanche of Navarre, and for her brother's sake she yielded at once. When the time came, followed by several others, they sought the chamber where the count lay ill ; and those two fair girls approached the couch of sickness ; but oh, with what a different air—and, oh, with what different feelings ! They both spoke to him, but they spoke not alike : the words of

Isabel were mingled of lightness, and grief, and tenderness—those of Blanche were calm and gentle, but tending to better thoughts. She read him no homily, but she spoke with the voice of purity and wisdom; and, while she told him that she sincerely wished his recovery, the last words of consolation which she addressed to him were such as awakened in his mind deep thoughts. She told him, that illness and wounds were not always misfortunes, and that often the sickness of the body wrought a cure in the diseases of the mind.

Thus saying, she turned to leave him; and Isabel of Valois, though she would fain have lingered, was obliged to follow also for very shame. When they were gone, the Count of Foix, upon his solitary couch of pain, fell into deep and somewhat curious meditation. He thought of the words that Blanche had spoken,—“that often the sickness of the body wrought a cure in the diseases of the mind.” How could that be? he asked himself; and, as he thought of the words, the tone, the look, the surpassing loveliness of her who had spoken them, came back upon his mind, like the beautiful objects of some splendid dream, and made the simple sentence that still rung in his ear seem like the words of prophecy. He paused and pondered; and, as he thought, the pain of his wound, severe as it was, was almost forgotten in the new and thrilling interest that grew upon his heart. He compared her, mentally, with the proud beauty who had stood beside her; and he could not but feel that, in the pure, bright lustre of her virtuous calmness, her loveliness acquired a dignity harmonious with itself, and far, far surpassing the haughty consciousness of her brother’s wife.

He felt, too, that to take aught from that brilliant purity would be to rob her beauty of one half its splendour: he felt that—far beyond everything that sweet lines or lovely

colouring can produce—there shone, through every movement and through every look, the effulgence of a noble and a generous heart—the brightness of a gentle, innocent, unsullied mind. He asked himself, whether, even were it in his power, he would profane that sweet tabernacle with one evil thought? and still, as he pondered, her words came back into his ear, and again he asked himself, “Could the sickness of the body really work a cure in the diseases of the mind?”

He put another question to his heart,—“Was the state in which he had so long lived a disease of the mind, or not? Was the prostitution of great talents and high qualities, unequalled powers of mind and body, and a heart once pure and virtuous—was it, or was it not, a malady?”—and the thoughts which such questions produced were painful, were agitating, were terrible. He strove to cast them from him, and to think as he had thought before. He strove to think of Isabel of Valois, and her too evident partiality; but still by her side, as fancy gave her picture to his eyes, rose up the brighter form of Blanche of Navarre, and outshone the other in the light of innocence and beauty. With the night came fever—the tamer of the strong spirit, the breaker of the wild imagination—and bowed him to its will. He struggled against its power during the live-long night; and, with a wandering mind and throbbing brain, tossed to and fro upon the couch. Morning found his great strength enfeebled; his strong sinews without power; his muscles relaxed; his face wan and pale; his eye dim and haggard. The support of the corporeal frame was gone from the spiritual being; and, like a rider who has lost the power of governing the wild horse that carries him, his mind was carried away to thoughts he had ever shunned, and his heart rested on many a painful, many a reproachful memory.

During the morning, the king, with his bride and his sister, came to visit again the sick chamber of the wounded man; but how different was now the effect produced on the mind of Isabel of Valois and Blanche of Navarre! The one saw with surprise, and with somewhat of disgust, the ravages which one day of sickness and agony can produce in the most graceful form and the most beautiful countenance. She no longer saw the same Count de Foix—the handsomest of a handsome court: she only beheld a wan, sick man, writhing on a bed of pain; and her eye, which had been attracted by beauty alone, now turned away displeased.

Very different were the feelings of Blanche of Navarre. She beheld a man, whose vices she had condemned, while she had admired his higher qualities, stricken down in the midst of his pride and of his levity; brought, by the events of a single day, to the brink of the grave; suffering in body, and, as she suspected, suffering also in mind: and, all that was gentle and tender in a gentle and tender heart, rose up to her lips to give comfort and consolation to him for whom her voice had before known nothing but reproof and reprobation. Strange though it may be to say, there was something in the manner with which the count met the first look of Isabel of Valois, which, to the mind of Blanche, gave hope of better feelings rising in his heart. It was no longer the glance of bold and too familiar admiration: oh, no! his brow grew somewhat contracted, and his dark eye turned away. To herself he listened, and to her words of kindness, with apparently very different feelings,—with surprise, with attention, with gratitude; and when they were about to quit his apartment, he added,—“Lady, I thank you for your speech of yesterday; and I do begin to think, that the sickness of the

body may sometimes work a cure in the diseases of the mind."

"Think so ! oh, think so, my good lord !" replied Blanche ; "and should you find, that in your mind or heart there be some malady, take now the time when its cure can be wrought ; and forget not, when you are restored to health, the salutary thoughts which visit us all in sickness."

The proud lip of Isabel of Valois curled with a scornful smile, as she turned away ; and she was scarcely out of hearing, when she exclaimed, speaking to her husband, " Our sister Blanche will preach, and Francis of Foix will listen, as long as he is in sickness. Doubtless he will promise to become a Capuchin till he is well ; but then his fair preacher will find that he will leave the gray gown with her, and be as merry a libertine as ever."

It might have been with many a man as Isabel of Valois predicted ; it might have been so with the Count of Foix, himself, under many circumstances. Returning health might have brought returning passions : strength, in its bold security, might have laughed at past warnings ; and evil habits, broken but by a short interruption, might have resumed their iron and irresistible sway over a heart full of fire and impetuous feelings. But there were many, many events, occurred to lead the mind of Francis of Foix into a new train ; there were many, many motives combined to give a fresh bent, a different object, to all his feelings. The first of those motives was love ! Isabel of Valois visited him no more, but Blanche went twice to see him, with her brother, during the severer part of his malady ; and her kindness and her gentleness—kindness and gentleness so pure, so noble, so chaste, that even vanity itself, man's vanity, the most impudent

and deceitful of all liars, could not mistake and dared not falsify her feelings—implanted in his heart the first germ of real love which that heart had ever known. Though full of strong passions, hitherto it had not known love. The seeds that fell upon it had been of lighter things, which grew up like shrubs upon a rock, blossomed for an hour, and faded away.

But now, a stronger tree had taken root : passion—eager, ardent passion, rising from veneration, esteem, and admiration !—and how that tree was nourished by sweet sympathies, fostered by close intercourse, and even rooted more firmly by the storm and tempest of adverse circumstances, is now to be told.

In the course of time he became convalescent ; and, as soon as he was permitted, proceeded to offer his thanks to the Queen of Navarre. She was surprised to behold the beauties and graces of his person restored, though he could not yet move without support ; but his illness had reached the stage when it only added deeper interest to that excited by his noble presence and handsome form. The admiration of Isabel of Valois returned ; and she determined, that all the many weeks which the surgeons affirmed must be passed in tranquillity and repose, ere the count could be pronounced well, should be spent in her society. She had no scruples, and but small diffidence ; and, if there were evil passions in her heart, she hesitated little at the means employed to gratify them. She was not without art, however ; and Blanche of Navarre was often called upon to sanction, by her presence, the long interviews between the Count of Foix and her brother's wife.

Blanche shrank from being present : not that she suspected actual evils in the thoughts or wishes of the queen, but she deemed her conduct towards Francis of Foix—

covered though it was by some idle idea of distant relationship—bold, rash, and unwomanly. Of the count, too, she had many doubts. She hoped, she trusted, that a change had come over his feelings and his thoughts; she fancied that she saw the change in every word and action; but still she feared, and still she doubted.

Was there, also, in her bosom a doubt as to what might ever become the feelings of her own heart towards him? There was! and wisely she shrunk from putting into the hands of one who might misuse it, the slightest power over her future peace of mind. She had done her duty to him, as one fellow-creature to another; she had done more than most would do; and now she sought to avoid a man whom she had first reprobated, then pitied, and now feared. Nevertheless, she was, almost daily, forced to be present, while Francis of Foix spent long hours with Isabel of Valois, during the days of his convalescence; and her presence was to him a blessing and a safeguard.

The comparison was always before him of good and evil, and that comparison was too powerful to leave judgment to hesitate. Love, too, was on the side of judgment, for love grew daily more powerful over his heart; and as he gazed upon Blanche of Navarre, sitting by the side of Isabel of Valois, he fell into deep fits of musing, which the latter loved not. What was the subject of his musing? How he might win that radiant creature to return the love he felt; how he might change the cold and frigid courtesy, which now clothed all her words towards him, to that warmer confidence which alone can be the nurse of affection: how he could shew her, how he could prove to her, that she alone of womankind possessed, or ever had possessed, his heart.

Strange, too, and full of thoughtful marvellings, was the picture of his own feelings to his own eyes. How changed

how wonderfully changed they were ! He found that there was another passion, different, far different, from that which he had hitherto confounded with love. He found that there were feelings deeper, more intense, more noble, than woman had ever awakened in his bosom before ; he found that selfish gratification was not the object, idle admiration not the spring of love. He gazed on that beautiful being, and he felt passion in its most ardent form ; but, as he touched her hand to lead from the hall to the banquet-chamber, a thrill—a strange and timid thrill—passed unwonted through his frame ; and he, whose lip had never wanted words to tell a tale of love, now hardly dared confess to his own heart how love had mastered all its powers. He gazed upon her, but he spoke not the feelings that were busy in his bosom. He dared not speak them—he dared not let them appear : he felt that he must first blot out from her memory many a tale of wild passion, ere he could talk of love to her pure ear. He felt not alone that for worlds he would bring no stain upon that bright creature, were it even in his power ; but he began, for her sake, to regret that there were stains upon himself. She had taught him to think virtue beautiful ; she had taught him to think it a part of excellence.

The qualities which he had before prized, both in himself and others, had now sunk low, low in his estimation ; and endowments, of a more noble and elevated character, were gradually rising up to be wondered at and admired.

He who, in the pride of haughty success, had thought all the world, but more especially woman, born but to bow to him, and yield to his pleasure, now undervalued all his own powers, judged himself too harshly, and thought himself all unworthy of her regard who had wrought such a change in him. Habit, evil habit, indeed, was potent with him, as with other men ; and, as we have said, with the return of

buoyant health, custom might have resumed her hold upon him : the fascinations of Isabel of Valois might not have been employed in vain ; the vanity and the passions of the man might both have been excited, when he felt himself courted by one so high and so beautiful ; and strong evil might have again triumphed over the first weak effort of virtue.

But that bright, dangerous queen, had, unwittingly, placed the antidote beside the poison. In her proud consciousness of beauty and of grace, of wit, of talent, and of courage, she never dreamed that the calm and quiet princess of the small mountain state, the mild and unassuming Blanche of Navarre, could ever become her rival where she stooped to please ; and all that she could wish to do was undone, before she perceived that she had counteracted herself. At length, however, she saw—saw with anger—that when she spoke, Francis of Foix turned the head away, or answered sometimes coldly, sometimes abstractedly ; while, on the contrary, when the voice of Blanche sounded in his ear, an instant smile spread radiant over his face, his eyes were filled with new light, and his whole soul seemed moved to answer her. He talked of virtue, too ; he praised those calm and gentle qualities which throng round woman in her household duties, and grace her more than gems.

Nay, more ! He seemed to feel the virtues that he praised, and to have learned abhorrence of the vices which he censured. From time to time, with flashing eyes and scornful lip, Isabel sneered aloud at words of purity from such a tongue as his ; called up, in angry sportiveness, his errors in the past ; and asked, how sermons sounded from the lips of so virtuous a man ?

Twice he was silent ; but at length, urged too far, replied,—“Lady, what you say is true. I am often ashamed, thinking of the past, to speak of the new feelings that I

experience at present. The time was, when I should have scoffed to hear such thoughts expressed by men far worthier than myself; but now, when I venture so to speak, it is in all humility, and with deep regret, that to the ordinary errors of man's youth, I have added others with deliberate folly."

The queen laughed loud and tauntingly; but the liquid eye of her he loved beamed brightly on him: and he was repaid. The time came, however, when Isabel of Valois could not laugh. His indifference—far from calming what at first was, perhaps, but an idle passion, entertained but for the purpose of trifling gaily through an unfilled hour—only added fire and eagerness. She learned to love intensely, when she began to feel herself despised; and angry jealousy took place of dangerous coquetry and evil trifling.

She watched, with keen eyes, every action, both of Francis of Foix and Blanche of Navarre: but Blanche was still calm and cold towards the gay noble of another land. She might, indeed, feel her heart glow with generous pleasure, to believe that an ennobling change had come over his soul; that the worst passions had been crushed down for ever; and that all the high and splendid qualities which his mind possessed, were now likely to stand forth free, bright, and unencumbered, on the strong basis of virtue. She might, indeed, acknowledge, too, that all those graces of person which are, in truth, but the outward symbols—though sometimes forged—of graces of the mind, did not pass unheeded by an eye that loved to contemplate every beautiful and every perfect thing in the wide creations of nature and of art. She might do more: she might confess, that when she gazed on that speaking countenance, and that graceful form; and heard eloquent words flow from those manly lips; and marked that no light jest nor doubtful thought now found utterance there, but only high-toned feelings, clothed in powerful

words,—a thrill, a happy thrill, would spread through all her frame, as her heart told her that she had a share in this.

Perhaps she might have gone further still : perhaps she might have owned, that her heart beat high to see that his thoughts, and words, and actions, were all addressed to her. Nevertheless, she still doubted—she still feared ! The words of her sister-in-law still rang in her ears ; “ that with returning health and strength Francis of Foix would again become what Francis of Fox had been.” She asked herself, could he resist temptation, opportunity, habit, the jest of old companions, the seduction of new charms ?

She asked herself all this : and she looked into her own heart, and saw that she could never love one of whom she was not sure ; or if, to her mishap, she did love such a man, that his first evil act—that the first word or thought which degraded him from the high throne of her esteem, which removed the image sanctified by love from the shrine of her heart, would ruin sanctuary and all, and leave her not a wreck of happiness behind.

Such feelings, such consciousness, such thoughts, made her throw a thick veil of cold and distant reserve over the warmer sensations of her heart ; made her treat him who so deeply interested her as a mere calm acquaintance—the distant cousin of her brother’s wife ; and it was but rarely that some noble thought, or princely action ; some bold and public recantation of former errors ; some calm and tranquil reply to those who scoffed at virtue, brought about by sickness, won from her a bright and encouraging smile, which afforded a hope, though distant, and, like a far-off beacon to the weary mariner’s eye, promised success to his efforts, and pointed out the only course.

It was in vain, then, for some time, that Isabel of Valois

watched and suspected. No sign betrayed that Blanche's heart was touched ; no word, nor look, nor action, shewed that she gave aught like encouragement to a passion which each day became more apparent.

At length, one evening, in the lustrous twilight of that splendid climate: in the bright moment—for it is little more than a moment—between the sinking of the golden day and the rushing conquest of the deep night, Blanche of Navarre stood gazing from the window upon the last rays of the setting sun, as they lingered, with blushing love, upon the high summits of the western hills. Her heart was at war with itself, and yet the warfare was not painful. She felt a tenderness creeping over it which she would fain have banished ; she felt that her power over her own thoughts was failing, and she would fain have recovered that power. But, even while she struggled with her own feelings, the voice of the enchanter Hope took part against her, and told her, that to yield to that mighty power which every heart must one time know, was better than to resist. As she thus thought, and gazed forth upon the evening sky and varying mountains ; and as the deep loveliness of that bright scene in the calm twilight hour sunk into her soul with bland and softening influence, a step sounded near her. Ere she could turn and see whose form it was that crossed the windows of the hall, her heart had told her, and it beat quick and high. The next moment Francis of Foix was by her side, but for a time some overpowering feeling seemed to tie his tongue : his wonted eloquence was gone : his daring courage at an end. He trembled like a girl ; and the heart which never had known a fear, now beat quicker than hers beside whom he stood.

“ Lady,” he said, at length, “ I have dared to seek you

and yet, now that I am here, I scarcely know how to express my thoughts.

There is a peculiar skill in woman to master, even in moments of deep emotion, the outward display of feeling, and to conceal the inward struggle of the heart's mutinous garrison from every eye but God's. Blanche of Navarre felt as if each moment she should have sunk to the ground: yet she stood firm, and in her aspect calm, as if the bright tranquillity of her former years still reigned undisturbed within. She even so far conquered agitation as to say, in a low, quiet voice,—“There is nothing, I should suppose, that the Count de Foix can have to say to Blanche of Navarre which should trouble him to speak.”

“Lady,” he replied, “did Francis of Foix feel as once he felt—were he the vain, conceited being which once he was—did he believe that every woman was to be a slave to his will, or that he had powers to conquer and persuade even to virtuous love, he might speak boldly. But, alas! now—now, how is he changed! Though there was a time when he dared all and every thing for far less worthy objects, now he scarcely dares to name his wishes or his hopes, though on them depends the happiness of all his after life.”

He paused, and looked up for some word or sign of encouragement, but Blanche answered nothing. There was a dewy brightness in her downcast eye, however—there was a slight tremor in her snow-white hand, as it rested on the stone-work of the window, which afforded hope; and Francis of Foix continued:—

“Lady, I know that I am unworthy. It is you who have taught me that I am so: and, oh! Blanche, when I tell you that I love you—that I love you better than life, or anything life contains, think not that it is the lip of the idle

libertine that speaks ; for that love, that deep, intense love, has taught me also the love of virtue ; the love of virtue has taught me to abhor vice, to hate even myself—to hate what I have been. But, oh ! Blanche, know me—in pity know me but as I am ! Forget the past, forget the follies and vices of other days—see me but as you have made me ; and, oh ! give me hope, in order that hope may give me strength and encouragement in the way of right.”

Blanche started : the words he spoke both suggested a fear of the permanence of the change, and a means of trying its reality.

“Do you mean, my lord,” she said,—“do you mean, that if Blanche of Navarre can give you no hope of ever obtaining her hand—for I will not affect to misunderstand you—do you mean, that if she can give you no reward, no encouragement, you may fall back into the errors of your former life ?”

Francis of Foix paused thoughtfully for a moment. Old habits and deep acquaintance with the wayward, the capricious, the weak, the vain, and the vicious part of womankind, suggested to his mind for a single instant that Blanche might seek and find a good excuse for yielding to her own inclination in his favour, if he admitted that he might relapse into evil should she deny him. But the nobler spirit which her love had enthroned in his heart rose up instantly, and trampled the demon under foot. He paused, and gazed in her face ; then, clasping his hands together, he exclaimed,—

“No, Blanche, no !—God forbid that I should use any persuasions towards thee but the true ones. No ! pure, and beautiful, and good, and noble, if I cannot win thee by truth, I will ever live or die in wretchedness without thee. No ! if thy heart can never be mine ; if the errors of my early years have inspired thee with abhorrence that thou canst not

conquer; if some happier man have won the jewel that I cannot win; if cold indifference even place its icy barrier between thee and me;—still, Blanche of Navarre, still thou hast conquered, thou hast convinced, thou hast humbled, thou hast amended! Thy memory would keep me pure if thy love were denied; and the light which has shone upon my soul from thee and thy virtues, should never go out again till the cold earth of the grave were cast upon my breast.”

Blanche trembled very much, and she was several moments ere she could reply; but at length she said, in a low and faltering tone, “I fear, Sir Count, I very much fear, that resolutions taken under the influence of passion are rarely more permanent than those formed during the reign of sickness. I can promise nothing, my lord, and dare say but little till I am more assured. Suffice it,” she added, after a moment’s pause, and lifting her eyes for a single instant to his countenance,—“suffice it, that I love no one, that my heart is free, and,” she added, hesitating,—“and it may be won; but it must be won by upright honour and pure virtue. One word more I may say: think not that the past will linger in my mind if the future be contrasted brightly with it. He who conquers his vices must ever be, in the eyes of Blanche of Navarre, more worthy than if he had never erred; for he gains a victory over a great enemy.”

“Enough! enough! enough!” he cried; and, as he spoke, hope, like the fitful flame, once more blazed up with a brighter light than ever it had before cast upon the future. “Enough! enough!—oh! dearest Blanche, you have spoken enough! Too well I know your nature—too well, by sad comparison with others, do I know the beauty and candour of your heart—too well, far too well, to doubt for one single instant, that those words, calm, and gentle, and noble as they are, imply a promise and a hope, a boon, a consolation, an encouragement.

I have risked all to tell you the truth. I have risked all and gained all, and now I know that success with you depends upon myself. Forgive me if I speak too boldly—forgive me if I speak too rashly ; but yet I know and feel, and dare to avow I feel, that on myself and on my own conduct, whereof I entertain no doubt, depends my chance of winning you—of winning happiness, of winning love ; love, such as my heart has never known—love, such as my heart never, till lately, hoped for. Henceforth, dearest ! most beautiful, most noble, most pure ! henceforth I journey through life like a pilgrim ; with, high before his eyes, raised on some blue mountain's cloudy brow, the shrine to which all his efforts, all his wanderings, tend,—raised far above himself, but still the object of his aspirations and his hopes ; to reach which nothing is required but strength, and fortitude, and resolution, and which nothing can debar him from but folly, vice, or weakness.”

He took her hand in his—her unresisting hand—and, raising it calmly to his lips, he added, “ Blanche of Navarre, beautiful and beloved ! princess of a sovereign house as thou art, thou mayest think it bold that Francis of Foix has raised his eyes to thee. But, lady, I tell thee, and tell thee true, that never sovereign of thine house, however warlike be his name in story, has gained a greater conquest than thou hast. I do not speak in pride, and, if I do, it is in pride of my humility. I say not that thou hast conquered Francis of Foix, for that were vanity ; but I say, that thou hast conquered a stubborn human heart, pampered with pride, nourished with much success, strengthened with idle fame, panoplied in iron habits, and leading on a host of follies, vices, and mistakes, to war against one bright and beautiful being armoured alone in virtue, and weaponed solely with right. I say it in all humility—as the chained captive, as the vanquished and the humbled ; and when I kiss this lovely hand, it is but as the conquered and the abased, bowing the head before the

potent rod which has brought him into subjection to a nobler and more generous power. For ever, for ever, I am thine and virtue's! and if, in future life, I e'er forswear this fealty by word or deed, trample me under thy feet as a faithless renegade! And now but appoint me trials, that I may undergo my proof, and walk on with hope to happiness."

Again and again he kissed that small fair hand; and it might well be seen that passion had lost nothing of its fire by being purified from the dust and ashes that kept it smouldering with a dull, foul, lowly flame. Now it blazed high, clear, bright, and open, and only gained intensity from being concentrated upon one point.

Blanche of Navarre felt all that she had done, felt all that she had said; but yet, with agitation and alarm, there was mingled a hope, and an expectation, and a thrill of joy—of joy, oh how bright, how glorious, how ennobling; joy springing from the elevation, from the brightening, from the beautifying of the character of a being that we love; joy born from the thanksgiving of triumph over evil; joy lighted up by feeling ourselves beloved, with threefold and most ample love, for having given back virtue to a noble heart—for having restored the bright deity to a worthy shrine.

All this she felt, and felt it in its utmost intensity—nor any the less for the apprehensions that accompanied it; for the human heart, even in the brightest and the best, values certain joy less than when it is doubtful and in expectation. Again and again he kissed her hand; but, as he did so, at length she started and withdrew it; not that she feared aught from him, for, mingled with the passionate energy with which he pressed it to his lips, there was deep deference and respect; but at that moment a shadow seemed to pass across the further side of the hall. In the dim twilight of that evening hour, and in that vast Gothic chamber, the eyes of Blanche could not discover who it was that crossed towards the opposite

door ; but she, standing at the window, with all the light which yet lingered in the evening sky forming a background, bright when contrasted with the gloom within, was but too well seen at that moment when Francis of Foix pressed his lips upon her hand.

The eye of Isabel of Valois was upon them ; and all the rage of disappointed passion, mortified pride, and wounded vanity, took possession of her heart at once. The action of that rage upon herself need not be dwelt on here : its effect upon her conduct towards others is what we have to deal with. She passed a sleepless and angry night ; and by the following morning, rose determined to wreak her hatred on Blanche of Navarre by any means that offered. But, though she was prepared to go to the most extreme lengths that hate and anger could dictate, her mind was too shrewd and piercing not to see that she must conceal her wrath to sate its appetite more completely.

From the first moment she had set her foot within her husband's kingdom, her husband's sister had been the object of her hatred and her envy. She had seen that the admiration of his people and his court followed Blanche of Navarre in preference to her ; and that had been cause of enmity enough. The place which Blanche had held in that kingdom, and that palace, became another object of jealous anger. All this had rendered her treatment of that fair and noble girl anything but like the fruit of sisterly love. Now, however, when, added to all the rest, she saw that Blanche had borne away from her the love of one on whom herself had fixed too deep and dangerous an affection, strange to say, her conduct became changed. While rage flashes forth, deep hatred often clothes itself in smiles ; and such was the garb which hers assumed, the better to conceal her purposes.

On the morning after that on which all her jealous suspicions had been confirmed by what she had seen, she greeted

193



Blanche with gay and affectionate demeanour; and none, of all the court, could divine what caused the unusual paleness of her cheek, for the queen seemed both well and happy. At the great assembly of the Navarrese nobles, in the evening, she singled out Don Ferdinand de Leyda, who, now recovered from his wounds, had returned to court, and lived there on terms of friendship with his late opponent. She conversed with him several times in a low tone, and, with many a gay smile and sportive gesture, seemed holding with him some light and pleasant communion on matters of revelry or amusement. Still towards Blanche she continued the same demeanour; and Blanche, who knew not what hatred is—except the hatred of evil—felt the change with pleasure, and looked forward to the coming hours with brighter hopes.

It was on the third evening after, when the sun had gone down, and all the town was ringing with the revelry which, at that time, in Navarre, accompanied each high festival, that the queen announced to her fair sister her intention of going forth disguised, amongst the rest, and mingling with the merry-making of the time. She asked the company of her husband's sister, too; and, when Blanche shrunk back, and steadily refused, Isabel of Valois informed her, boldly, that the king himself was to be of the party; and, though unwilling and surprised, the princess at length yielded. She had scarcely made her preparations when she was joined by the queen and several others, all already masked; and in one she thought she recognised her brother. An injunction, however, was given to keep silence till they had quitted the palace; and, issuing forth into the streets, they mingled with a multitude of other groups, all full of gaiety, and mirth, and song.

They wandered on for some time; but Blanche at length grew uneasy, for the mask she had taken for her brother soon belied his appearance by his voice. Isabel of Valois, however, hurried forward towards the great square, where the multi-

193





18. 1. 1911

18. 1. 1911

The sculpture is a Pietà, showing the Virgin Mary holding the body of Jesus. The figures are positioned on a raised platform or altar, with a decorative railing in the foreground. The overall mood is somber and dramatic.

18. 1. 1911



tudes of the Navarrese capital seemed all gathered together; and there, in the press and the crowd, Blanche and the queen were suddenly separated from the rest of the party; and the queen, seizing her arm, exclaimed,—“Come hither, come hither! if thou lovest me, dear sister, come hither! there is some one I would fain avoid.” And, linking her arm through that of Blanche, so as to prevent the possibility of her escaping, she hastened on, turned through the long arcades, and darted forward into a doorway which stood open.

Blanche tried to stay her; but still she hurried onward, saying that she knew her way, and that the passage which they followed would but bring them into the back street whence they could return at once to the palace. Blanche desired nothing further, and followed quickly on; when, to her surprise, the queen pushed open a door, and she found herself in a moment in a blaze of light. The glare, following the darkness, blinded her for a time; but the next instant she perceived that she was in a high gallery, raised above a large and splendid hall. It had been built for musicians, but there were none there at the moment; and below, seated at a table, was a gallant assemblage of the young nobles of the land, with Don Ferdinand de Leyda at their head, and Francis of Foix sitting on his right hand. Though concealed by the pillars that supported the roof, Blanche would instantly have darted back again out of the gallery; but Isabel of Valois held her firmly by the arm, without uttering a word, and even advanced still further towards the front. None of the guests seemed to see them; but, at that very moment, Don Ferdinand de Leyda filled the golden cup at his side, and, bending his head, with a light smile to Francis of Foix, he said,—“My noble lord count, when we last met here, we had a foolish quarrel on your drinking to your *next* conquest—Blanche of Navarre.”

The queen turned, and Blanche could perceive her glorious black eyes gazing upon her through the mask with a gleam of triumph and satisfaction. But Don Ferdinand went on : " At present, my lord, I rise to drink to our permanent friendship, now cemented by generous blood, as well as generous wine ; and, as you have lain a wounded man amidst fair and compassionate ladies, I suppose I may add to my toast your *last* conquest—Blanche of Navarre ? "

Blanche's strength failed her ; and she would have sunk to the ground had not the firm hold of the queen supported her.

Francis of Foix turned to reply : and, though she trembled in every limb, she listened eagerly for his words. Though he spoke not so loud as the other had done, the full, rich tones swept up to where she stood ; and she heard him clearly say—

" Willingly, good friend, do I drink that part of your toast which wishes our permanent friendship ! But if you would drink my last conquest, lords and nobles of Navarre, drink to my conquest over myself ! When last we met around this board, I, in the mad vanity of my idle conceit, declared that I would conquer Blanche of Navarre, or she should conquer me—and now I tell you all, the conquest has been hers ! Ah ! and, though I love her more than life, no knight in all Navarre shall couch a lance more willingly than I against the breast of any one who says that she is aught but purity itself ! "

The nobles who surrounded him gazed on him for an instant as he stood before them ; and then, as if by one consent, each started forward and grasped his hand in turn. But Blanche of Navarre had not seen that action ; for, at the words which came so balmy to her heart, the queen had stamped her foot with angry vehemence, upon the gallery, and dragging her forth into the passage, cast off her hold and left her to find her way back alone.

In terror and apprehension, Blanche hastened on, and regained the square ; but there, amidst a multitude of strangers, excited by gaiety and good companionship, wild with revel and drunkenness, she, a solitary woman, hurrying on with a terrified air, was stopped at every turning, agitated by rudeness and impertinence ; and, when at length she reached the palace-gates, she found them closed ; and the attendants refused to give her admittance till she had unmasked her face and discovered who she was.

With a burning cheek and a throbbing heart, she sought her own apartments ; but she had not long reached them, when a messenger from her brother called her to his presence. The queen was hanging upon his bosom, bedewed with false and hypocritical tears : and he instantly poured forth upon Blanche's head a torrent of reproaches, for misleading his young wife in regard to the customs of the land. Blanche now found that she had been deceived, and that her weak brother had been deceived also. He had neither been present, nor had ever heard of any of the proceedings of that night, till the queen, coming home, in answer to his angry reproof, had given him a false statement of the whole, casting the blame of all upon his sister.

Blanche heard him to an end, and then told him truth. But the queen rose up in indignant passion, exclaiming, that if he chose to sit there and hear his bride calumniated, she, at least, would not remain to be traduced and insulted to her face ; that he might believe which he pleased—her or his sister Blanche ; but that the prolonged absence of his sister, after all the rest had returned, might well shew him which tale was most worthy of credit. For her part, she said, she never spoke aught but truth ; and she would stay nowhere where her truth was doubted. She was ready, she added, to return to her native land ; and, in quitting Navarre, there

was none that she should regret but only him, her husband : and she wept again, with well-dissembled grief. She then quitted the apartment ; and Blanche saw, with bitter pain and many an apprehension, that her brother's mind was completely under the dominion of a false, fiery, vicious woman.

It was not her part, however, to say aught against her ; but she defended herself. She reminded him, that from youth they had been brought up together ; that he had seen, and must have remarked, all her actions ; must have known, and learned to trace, the sources of all her thoughts, even from the sweet, undisguised days of infancy, to the more mature, but not less candid days of womanhood. Through life, to the eye of fraternal affection she had opened her bosom, like a flower expanding to the summer sun ; and she now called upon him to say, whether ever yet in life he had discovered one deceitful thought, one subterfuge, one falsehood ?

He owned that he had not ; he owned that he knew her to be truth itself ; and yet he felt sure, he said, that his bright queen,—his lovely Isabel—was true and virtuous also. There must have been some great mistake between them—some extraordinary error ; one of those misunderstandings which so often produce bitterness and enmity between people formed by nature to love and to esteem each other. He besought Blanche, then, to let him mediate between her and the queen ; and, though at first he had been all wrath and indignation, his whole desire was now—the desire of weak minds—to restore harmony between people who could never assimilate, and to purchase tranquillity by unworthy concessions.

Blanche was silent, and left him to act as he thought fit ; and on the following day he descended with his queen, who now assumed all the airs of sullen and offended pride, and appeared to hold high her own forbearance, in tolerating the presence of the person whom, in truth, she had

greatly injured. For a time the king felt inclined to take the part of her whom he had loved from infancy, whom he had never known to swerve from truth, and whom he now felt to be in the right ; but the artful woman to whom he was bound played upon his passions, made use of his weaknesses, led him to tolerate her injustice, made him a party to her errors ; and, once having done so, armed his vanity against his innocent sister, in defence of the wrong he committed or suffered.

Thus, day by day, new insults and new mortifications were poured upon the head of Blanche of Navarre. In the face of the whole court she was neglected and ill-treated. She was reprovèd for faults she did not commit ; her actions, her words, her very thoughts, were misrepresented. When silent, she was called sullen ; and, when she spoke, she was scoffed down with scorn. She bore, with unanswering patience, the daily torture to which she was subjected ; but she grieved for her brother, even more than for herself. She grieved to see a nature, good, though weak, perverted and debased : she grieved even to know that the time must come when his blinded eyes would be opened, and opened but to misery. And yet she could not but feel bitterly the personal evils of her situation. Often her heart would swell with indignation, and she would long to pour forth the severe truth which rose to her lips ; often her breast would throb with anguish, and she would long to weep for those insults which her generous nature refused to retaliate.

She had one consolation, however, during all her sorrow : Francis of Foix continued at the court of Navarre ; and his presence was to her a blessing. It was not alone that, every day, she saw him still walk with noble firmness in that right path into which her love had led his footsteps ; but it was, also, that every pang which was inflicted upon her but

increased his tenderness and affection,—that every insult which was offered to her but made his devotion more deep and more apparent. His eyes would flash at each harsh word addressed to her; his lip would quiver at the scornful glance which she did not return; and his voice would soothe, console, and support her, when open neglect, or rude uncourteousness, was all that she met with from those who should have loved and cherished her.

To Blanche, this was all a blessing and a consolation; but, to Isabel of Valois, the sight of that unconcealed tenderness was like swallowing molten fire. At one time, she thought to point out to her husband the love which she too surely felt to exist, and to induce him to drive forth from his court, with ignominy, if not with vengeance, the object of her own criminal passion. But then, her heart failed her; the very opposition that she met with, made that passion more intense; and, with rage mingling with her love, she suffered Francis of Foix to remain: while a thousand vague, wild schemes for ridding herself of her rival, chased each other, day by day, through her brain. At one moment, her mind rested on the darkest and most unscrupulous means of delivering herself from the presence of her she envied, hated, and feared; and, had the poisoned cup been near at hand, or could the dagger have been used without great risk, fair Blanche of Navarre might have passed away from earth by some unknown fate. But Isabel could use no such means without risk to herself. She had none around her on whom she could thoroughly depend; and a knowledge of her own baseness made her fear to confide in any one: the base, because she doubted them; the virtuous, because she feared them. She pursued her plans, however, with the pertinacious virulence of a malignant woman; and the weakness of her husband rendered him her constant tool.

At length she succeeded. It was one morning early in the bright summer, while the cool grey of the dawn still mingled with the warm and golden promises that were poured forth from the kingly gates of the East, when Blanche of Navarre was awakened from calm sleep, and told that she must prepare to depart from the dwelling of her fathers. She arose to obey ; and, ere the world was yet awake, she was placed in a litter, and carried rapidly towards the distant mountains. Her brother's hand was to the order for departure, which was shewn her, and she made no resistance. She asked to see him, indeed, but was refused ; and all attendance, but that of one woman, was denied. Thus was she carried onwards towards that valley where, in days of yore, the steel-clad paladins of Charlemagne fought and fell before the weapons of a treacherous foe—towards that valley, famous in story and in song, where Orlando died, and left to the vague poetry of tradition a mighty shadow, and a dim but immortal fame.

Half-way between the pass of Roncesvalles and the city of Pampeluna, stood then one of those old Gothic castles which may still be seen throughout the course of the various valleys which they were built to defend against the incursions of many an inimical state around. Blue and high the mountains rose round about it ; while, perched on a rocky hill, starting up in the midst of a narrow valley, it commanded a view of the passes on every side, and guarded the spot where the various roads met. To this abode was Blanche of Navarre borne by those who escorted her ; and the orders which were given, in her hearing, to the captain of the fortress, into whose hands she was delivered, shewed her that she was thenceforth a prisoner, condemned unheard, and punished though innocent. The only thing that marked her brother's love, or her brother's consideration, was, that the

apartments assigned to her were spacious and arranged with taste, for her convenience.

But Blanche had within her own heart the courage which springs from virtue; the calm power of endurance which arises from a conscience at rest. She was not one to yield herself to despair, nor to fret, with impatient passion, under bonds that she could not cast off. With mild determination she made up her mind to endure that which was allotted her, and with hope she looked up to Heaven, and trusted that a time of deliverance would yet come. From the windows of her apartments she gazed forth, and, instead of deriving gloom and melancholy from the aspect of the mighty rocks that surrounded her, their grand tranquillity seemed to sink into her soul, and to teach her to be unmoved, and firm, and peaceful, as themselves. The shadows of the clouds swept over their blue bosoms, the morning light tinged them with gold, and the evening purpled them with its rich parting hue: and such, also, seemed to be the course of her existence: the morning rose, and found her bright and calm; the evening set, and left her tranquil and resolved: the shadows of some dark cares would come across her mind; but its own serenity still returned, and the clouds passed away without leaving their traces behind them.

She thought, however, of Francis of Foix; she thought of him often, kindly and tenderly; she thought of all that he would suffer from her absence. She loved to let imagination picture his occupations, his thoughts, his feelings. It became a solace to her, an enjoyment, to be alone and think; and, in the perfect solitude wherein she lived, where no eye could see her, no scornful glance draw matter for a deriding laugh from the feelings of her heart, she would sit, and let the expression of those feelings pass as they would over her countenance, without one effort to repress them; now shewing themselves

in the downcast eye of melancholy, now sparkling in one dewy tear, now breaking forth into a bright smile of hope and confidence.

Thus passed the hours ; till, at length, one day, when, in the midst of her musings, she had given way to all she felt, and a name—now the more deeply beloved from having been dwelt upon long in the solitary companionship of memory—the name of Francis of Foix, trembled on her lips, her ear caught the sound of a quick-coming step, and, turning round, she beheld in her very chamber, a man wrapped in a long pilgrim's robe. Her heart beat quickly, but the next moment he himself was at her feet.

“Blanche!” he said, “Blanche! do you forgive me for what I have done? Do you forgive me for having sought you here—for having risked the discovery of all the love I bear you, in order to free you from the unworthy thralldom in which you are held?”

“Can you doubt it?” she replied. “Oh, Francis! can you doubt that this is a moment of joy?”

He pressed his lips upon the small hand he held, and then replied,—“And yet, dear Blanche, do you consider all that must be, if you would now obtain your freedom by the means that I have prepared? Think me not ungenerous enough, think me not base enough, to seek to take the slightest advantage of the shameful persecution to which you have been subjected, in order even to obtain happiness for myself. I speak but because thy pure and virtuous name is now as dear to Francis of Foix even as to yourself; and I would not—no, not for earth, and all that earth can give—by any act or deed of mine, bring, however unjustly, one stain upon that clear, unspotted fame. Hear me, therefore—hear me! If Blanche of Navarre flies with Francis of Foix, she must determine to become his wife as soon as they have together broken the bands with which tyranny has enthralled her. Safe, indeed,

shouldst thou be, dear Blanche," he added ; " safe, as a sister or a child, from word, or deed, or thought, that could offend thee, wert thou to wander with me, alone, persecuted, unprotected, throughout the world : and, were I as happy—had I been as wise, as many another man has been, thou mightest do so without fear of blame or of reproach. But Francis of Foix has made for himself an evil name, which ages of virtue will scarcely purify ; and I fear,—oh ! I fear to ask thee to fly with me, even from persecution and injustice, unless thy confiding heart can trust to the deep love thou hast inspired, and thy hand become mine as soon as we are free."

Blanche had turned pale, and then again red ; and now she sat with downcast eyes, and a cheek once more bloodless and white as marble. It was not that she feared ; it was not that she doubted any longer ; it was not even that her heart hesitated in regard to its choice. She knew, she felt that she loved him : she knew, she felt that she was truly beloved. But it was the very depth of such feelings : it was the very strength of the passion in her heart : it was the very intensity of the emotion in her bosom, that blanched her cheek, and caused her knees to shake.

She had to make a solemn promise, on which the happiness or misery of all her future life depended : she had to risk peace, joy, existence itself, upon the faith and truth of him she loved. All the world of a woman's happiness was to be staked upon the resolution of the instant : the shrinking modesty of her nature was to yield, for the first time, to acknowledge that she loved : every timid scruple was to give way, and she was to wed at once, without any of the sweet and gentle alleviations which the presence and comforts of friends, and many an old, habitual form and observance afford, to soften the great change in woman's life and feelings. But it was no apprehension

made her pause ere she replied ; it was not timid delicacy nor hesitating reluctance ; but it was that, at that moment, she felt and knew how deep, how strong, how all-absorbing was the love which had grown upon her heart. It was this that overpowered her ; it was this that took away her speech ; it was this that called all the blood from her cheek, and gathered the warm eddying stream into the filled fountain of her heart.

Francis of Foix saw, but comprehended not entirely, the agitation that she suffered. " Oh, Blanche !" he said, gently twining his arms round her, " doubt me, doubt me not ! Could you but tell the change that has taken place in my heart ; could you but feel how deeply, how totally, how through every thought and feeling, I am changed, you would not fear to trust me, even with the treasure of yourself. Let me shew thee how I am changed ! Let me tell thee,—let me dare to tell thee, that the time has been when the shameless renown of having triumphed over thy purity would have been no unwelcome sound to my ears. Yet now I pledge thee my honour and my soul, that I would sooner any one should call Francis of Foix a coward, than that one stain should rest on Blanche of Navarre !"

" I know it, I know it !" she replied ; " I have heard thee speak it when thou thoughtest that no ears heard thee but those of scoffers. I have heard thee, Francis, and my heart has thanked thee. I know that thou wilt love me ; I know thou wilt be true to me ; I doubt thee no longer ; I am confident in thine honour."

" Then, why, why hesitate ?" he said.

" I hesitate not," she answered, while the warm blood now rushed up into her cheek, and glowed on her brow ; " I do not hesitate ! It was agitation, but not doubt. It was deep, deep emotion, but not hesitation !"

" Then, thou lovest me !" he exclaimed, pressing her

eagerly, but tenderly, to his bosom ; “then, thou lovest me, thou art mine ! Dear, dear Blanche ! thou hast led me back from the depths of folly and vice, and then hast rewarded the effort with thyself. A vow will bind us at the altar—a vow too often broken, too often utterly forgot. But here, before thee, as I kneel in the sight of God, who sees us both, I take a deeper vow ; to dedicate my whole existence unto thee, to make thy happiness my whole object, my whole care ; not alone to repay thee love for love, but to exceed all that thou canst feel or shew ; and prove to thee that the heart of Francis of Foix, like the bright blade of a well-tempered sword, may have been dimmed for a while by the breath of evil, but is still unruined, strong, and firm as ever. My Blanche ! My own ! My only beloved !”

Blanche bent down her head upon his shoulder and wept ; and ages of smiles were not worth that one moment of tears. But other matters pressed for thought ; and her lover told her, that he was there with three resolved companions, habited as pilgrims to the shrine of St. Jago ; that they had obtained hospitality of the governor of the castle, and that he had left his comrades below, to amuse that officer with story and with song, while he had obtained leave to wander round the ramparts of the castle. They were to repose there for that night : his train was within a few miles’ distance ; and if Blanche, he said, and her attendant, would be prepared by half an hour after midnight, he doubted not, either by corruption or by stratagem, to obtain the means of effecting her escape from the castle.

She promised ; and, after a few moments more, given to the outpourings of affection, he left her, to pursue his scheme. Blanche could trust in the girl who had accompanied her thither ; and, as soon as she entered the chamber, she told her all. Their preparations were speedily made ; and long and heavy seemed the hours till the sun went down behind

the mountains. Often, too, did they fancy that the weary marker of the march of time had fallen asleep upon his post, and believed that the castle clock had forgotten to strike the hours as they went by. The clanging step of the sentinels upon the ramparts and bastions, beneath the windows, seemed slower and more heavy than ever. The song of the warder in a neighbouring tower, as he gazed over the moonlit country, and enlivened his watching with sweet music, seemed tedious and interminable; and all the lagging tardiness of long expected moments hung upon them, till, at length, the bell tolled midnight. After that, silence soon fell over the castle; and they listened, fearful of speaking even in a whisper, lest they should lose some sound given as a signal or a warning.

The windows were open, and the summer air breathed sweet and mild; but, in a moment or two after, borne on the wings of that light wind, came a sound from amidst the rocky passes which led away towards Pampeluna. It was the clanging of a horse's feet over the hard road cut along the bosom of the mountain. It came on with furious speed, as if bearing some hasty messenger, sent with important tidings. Now it was faintly heard in the far distance; now ceased entirely, as some craggy turning intervened; now was perceived again, as the wind rose and the steed approached. It came on; grew louder and louder; next sunk away but not entirely, behind some bold rock or interposing hill; then burst forth again along the side of the nearest mountain, and ceased not, with measured clang, till a loud horn sounded at the gate.

Then creaked the portcullis up; down fell the drawbridge, and there were trampling feet and speaking voices in the court below. The heart of Blanche of Navarre sank with disappointed hope! and imagination, too, as often cruel as

she is kind, now leagued with apprehension to deduce a thousand evils from those simple sounds. The absence of her lover from her brother's court, she thought—nor did she think wrongly—might, by this time, have caused suspicion. His steps might have been followed, his path observed; and messengers might have been sent to arrest him, or defeat his purpose. Hope, the most timid, though the most persevering of guides, put out her torch in terror; and Blanche leaned her head upon the table and wept.

At that moment, however, the latch of the door was gently raised, and Francis of Foix stood before her.

"Quick!" he exclaimed, "quick, dearest Blanche! not a moment of time is to be lost! Give me your hand, beloved! Follow your mistress quick, fair maid. But first put on these pilgrims' gowns."

"Alas! alas! we are too late," replied Blanche; "there are people in the court below—some messenger is just arrived."

"I know it all," he answered, "I know it all! But the governor sleeps, well filled with wine: I have an order under his hand to give me exit by the postern, at what hour I please, accompanied by all my companions. The soldiers in the court are disputing whether they shall wake him: we have yet time, dear Blanche, so let us haste away."

Her heart beat high, her whole frame trembled; the inevitable step was to be taken; the last deciding act was to be performed which fixed her fate for ever; and, together with that consciousness—which at any time would have shaken her whole frame and moved her whole heart—were now combined danger and apprehension, the risk of disappointment, disgrace, and calumny.

Yet she hesitated not! She loved and was beloved; and the strong, ennobling passion, now, in the moment of diffi-

culty and peril, supplied strength, and courage, and firmness, to the weak frame and timid heart. She cast the cloak around her ; she drew the hood over her head ; she gave her cold and trembling hand to Francis of Foix ; and, with a quick but noiseless step, followed him, as he led the way along one of the corridors of the castle, and down the manifold steps which brought them to the lesser court. The moon, raising her broad, golden disc just above the dark masses of the distant Pyrenees, streamed full into the court ; and, on the other side, appeared the forms of three men, partly concealed from the windows of the castle by the shadow of the high wall—partly exposed from a break therein, practised through the upper part for the purpose of giving exit, by some steps, to a demi-lune, thrown forward upon a projection of the rock.

The heart of Blanche of Navarre sunk with terror and agitation at the sight of every being she encountered ; but Francis of Foix led her on, and she soon perceived, by the pilgrims' robes, that the three men she beheld were the followers of her lover. Up those steps, towards the demi-lune, lay the path they were to take ; and, as she felt herself emerging into the moonlight, she would have given worlds to have brought the darkest cloud that ever covered the heavens over the bright planet whose beams she so dearly loved. As they crossed the demi-lune, she turned, for a moment, to glance her timid eye over the frowning fortress she was leaving, in hopes of seeing it all calm and still ; but lights were moving about, from window to window of the keep, and, clinging closely to Francis of Foix, she hurried her pace even more quickly than his own.

At length they reached the sallyport, which first gave exit upon the brow of the rock, and thence, by a narrow and tortuous path, down into the valley below. The guar-

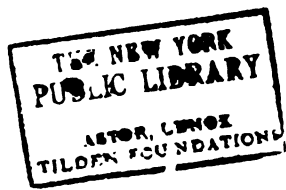
dian of that gate came forward at their approach ; read the order by the light of the lamp, and, seeing no restriction in regard to the number of persons whom he was to permit to pass out, threw wide the door, and let them go free. Oh ! with what joy and ecstasy did the bosom of Blanche of Navarre thrill, when she felt herself standing on the edge of the crag, with the free mountain air blowing, unconfined, around her ! Oh, with what joy did she hear the massy door clang to behind them, the key turn in the lock, and the bolts grate harshly in the stonework !

“ Now on, as quick as possible—no time is to be lost !” exclaimed the lover, as he hurried her forward. “ Horses are prepared below, dear Blanche : give me ten minutes now, and all Navarre shall never stay me.”

Ere they had descended a hundred yards, however, the clear, shrill notes of a trumpet were heard from the summit above ; followed by voices calling, and commands echoing from man to man, along the warded wall. A few steps further brought them to a point of the rock which Blanche had often beheld from the windows of her own apartments, and from it she now could see the tall tower wherein those apartments were situated, rising, dark and giant-like, above the steep. She raised her eyes to the windows, but all was blank. No light shone out therein ; and the apprehension which she had felt, lest her flight from that dark prison had been discovered, passed away. A moment afterwards, through the windows of the antechamber came a bright flash ; the next instant the whole suite of rooms was filled with light, and dark figures were seen crossing the blaze.

“ We are discovered !” she whispered, “ we are discovered !” But Francis of Foix only hurried her on the more quickly. A few steps further the rock ended, and the hill began to slope more gently into the valley ; and the

194





*found an old altar, paved with rude stone work,
the water of which had been drunk by many a
poor pilgrim, and a number of crosses and
small shrines.*



next moment, as their steps sounded along the path, the quick pawing of an eager horse's foot was heard, followed by a loud, shrill neigh.

"We are safe, dear Blanche! we are safe!" said her lover. "They have quick steeds and strong hands who tear thee from me now."

Round an old fountain, crowned with rude stonework, the waters of which had been drunk by many a passing generation, stood a number of horses and armed men; and on a light and easy jennet—with a heart beating like that of a fluttered girl, as he raised her for the first time in his arms—Francis of Foix placed Blanche of Navarre, saying,—"Thou art a fearless horsewoman, I know, dear Blanche: should we be pursued, and I be obliged to turn to defend the pass, ride boldly on with thy maiden, and one of my old and faithful followers, to whom I will give thee in charge. Fear not that I will do aught rashly; I will but give thee time to escape, and then follow with what speed I may. Long ere I be obliged to pause, however, we shall have come up with my brave men-at-arms: with them I would defend these gorges against the world."

All were soon mounted; and, guided by one who knew the country well, they rode quickly down into the valley. But, just as they gained the high-road which led on towards France, they caught sight of a large body of horse, descending the steep declivity from the castle, with their dark masses, bristled with pennon and with spear, cutting strong upon the moonlit sky. The Count de Foix turned to his guide to consult.

"How far is it," he asked, "to where the two roads join?"

"Some quarter of a league," replied the man.

"And yon road to the right?" asked the count.

"It leads into the valley of Bastan," was the reply.

"That is guarded, I know," said Francis of Foix :
"we must gallop on as quickly as may be."

They urged their horses into full speed along the mountain road, and reached the point where the highway from the castle joined the path they followed ; but they reached it only a few moments before the body of horsemen from above. The fugitives were concealed, it is true, by the wide cork-trees that spread along the slope ; but the sound of their horses' feet, while galloping, had not escaped those who followed : and Blanche was near enough to hear the orders given for quickening the progress of the pursuers. It now became a flight and a chase : but the horses of the Lord of Foix were swifter than those that came after, though not, perhaps, so strong ; and, for nearly an hour, they hurried on with headlong speed, till at length they came to a spot where the road seemed cloven through the solid rock, and, for some hundred yards or more, a gigantic wall of grey marble rose on either hand, with nothing but a narrow torrent, dashing its foamy way along, between the road and the rock.

Francis of Foix was by the side of her he loved ; and, as they entered that gloomy pass, he said,—“ Here I must take my stand ! Ride on, dear Blanche ; ride on, my beloved ! and fear not for me. I go to lay my lance in rest for Blanche of Navarre ; and, with that sweet name for my battle-cry, I would maintain this pass against the fiend himself. Ride on, my beloved ! ride on ; and, if you meet my men-at-arms, send them down to my assistance.”

She obeyed at once ; and, turning round, he drew up his men across the pass. Quick upon their steps came the pursuers ; and when, by the moonlight, they saw how well the narrow way was defended, the word was given to level their spears ; and hurled on, like a thunderbolt, against the small

band of the Count de Foix, they strove to cleave their way through by one vehement charge. But it was in vain they made the attempt: Francis of Foix had snatched a lance from the hand of one of his followers, and, in that narrow tilt-yard, met the leader of the Navarrese spear to spear. The Spaniard went down at once before his lance, and was borne backward from his horse. Happy it was for him that so it befell him; for the charger, freed from the rein, dashed forward, missed its footing, and rolled into the stream.

Driven back with loss, two of their front rank killed, and several wounded, again and again the Navarrese returned to the charge. No words were spoken, no questions were asked, but all seemed understood and known; and after their lances were shivered, with the sword, and the dagger, and the mace, they kept up the strife for nearly an hour. At the end of that time, however, just as the Spaniards had drawn off for a moment, with the purpose of again renewing the attack, the sound of many horses' feet, coming onward from the French side of the pass, was heard; and many a merry Gascon tongue, shouting and hallooing as they came up, shewed the pursuers that their efforts would be vain.

With lowering front, then, they withdrew; from time to time wheeling round, to see that they were not pursued in turn; but no such purpose was entertained by Francis of Foix, whose first questions were addressed to his newly arrived followers. They informed him that they had met with a frightened lady and her waiting damsel, accompanied by old Gaspard of Cervolles; that she had bade them hasten down to the assistance of their lord; and that old Gaspard had come on with them, to shew them where he was.

Francis of Foix could not find in his heart to speak harshly to his old retainer; but he blamed him mildly for having left the lady, and then rode on as fast as possible to

seek her, leaving a party behind to bring away the dead and wounded of his retinue.

He came to the place where his followers had been stationed, but Blanche of Navarre was not there. He rode on to a spot where three roads crossed, and then paused, anxious and apprehensive. Dismounting from his horse, he obtained a light from the splintered fragments of a pine, and eagerly searched, upon every path, for the fresh marks of a horse's feet. At length he found them; but the road on which they were visible led not in the direction which he had purposed to take. He followed it instantly, however, and blessed the glimmering dawn of light, that now came grey and soft above the eastern hills. He met a shepherd, leading his flock to pasture upon the higher grounds, and questioned him regarding Blanche. The man said, he had seen such a lady and her attendant, but that they had passed him quickly; and he warned the Count de Foix to seek some shelter, as, from the appearance of the dawn, he judged that there would be a storm ere the day was an hour old.

Francis of Foix spurred on, but he soon found the shepherd's warning true. The wind rose with sharp, fierce gusts; black clouds rolled over the morning sky; the thunder pealed amongst the mountains; the lightning flashed across the path; and worst of all, the hail came down, like stones hurled from some battering-engine, upon the heads of the travellers below. Still, Francis of Foix rode on. Terror and anxiety took possession of his heart. Though the men-at-arms could scarcely sit their horses for the wind and the hail; though the lightning made the chargers start and rear as they proceeded; still Francis of Foix rode on, still he marked every object as he proceeded, still he gazed around in search of some trace of her he loved.

At length, cast in a heap upon the path, he found the pil-

grim's cloak in which he had wrapped her ; a few steps onward lay dead the jennet on which she had been mounted ; and, spurring on with frantic eagerness, he drew not a rein till he beheld a little Navarrese village, seated sweetly in a rich wooded valley, surrounded on every side by mighty mountains. The storm, by this time, had passed away ; there was a look of hope and cheerful existence in the village before him ; and, trusting that Blanche might have found shelter there, he rode on, and questioned eagerly every one he met with in the place. But Blanche of Navarre had not been heard of ; and there every trace of her ceased. In vain he sought, in vain he searched for her : no mark, no sign, no report of her passing could be found.

* * * * *

In a vast old Gothic hall, the pointed vault of which could scarcely be seen by the dim light which found its way in through the narrow and dusky windows, were assembled the States of Navarre, called suddenly together in the city of Pampeluna. The upper part of the hall, raised a few steps above the rest, was filled with the deputies of the States, arranged in a semicircle before the people, who crowded the lower part of that wide, dim, and shadowy chamber. Guards and attendants kept the populace from pressing up the steps ; but, from the throng, and from the eager manner with which the people clung round the various pillars that supported the wide roof, in order to obtain a sight of what was passing, it was easy to perceive that some event of great interest was expected to take place—some matter of deep moment was about to be discussed.

Presiding over the States, covered by a canopy, and seated on his throne, appeared the young King of Navarre, with that mingled expression of passion and irresolution in his countenance which spoke the feebleness of his character. His

brow would now knit into an angry frown ; his white teeth would close over his under lip, and his nostrils would expand : and then again, the fierce aspect of his countenance would relax, the lip would tremble, the eye would roll vacantly over the populace, and the brow would become smooth and careless. On his right stood the Chancellor of Navarre, with a roll of papers in his hand ; and on the left, several officers of his household, his jester, and his page.

After some business of little importance had been transacted, which the people heard with evident impatience, and the States passed over with but small care, the chancellor took another step forward, a darker cloud came over his stern brows, the king raised himself sharply on his throne, every ear was turned to hear, every eye to see, and the low murmur of expectation died away into silence.

It was then that, in a loud clear voice, which was heard even in the most remote parts of the hall, the chancellor proposed to the States a decree, by which Blanche of Navarre and her children, to all generations, should be excluded from the throne of those realms, and from all right, share, or title, in and to the succession of her father, the late king. The chancellor assigned no reason for so harsh a sentence, and a murmur ran through the people and the States. There was much movement, too, amongst the populace in front ; and the king, with a loud and angry voice, ordered the heralds and men-at-arms to enforce silence and tranquillity. One of the deputies, however, an old man with silvery beard and hair, rose up and asked what was the cause to be given for so severe a decree against their native princess ? adding, that the records of the States of Navarre must never bear the trace of such an act without some just motive assigned.

“There are motives sufficient,” said the chancellor, frowning. “First, there is the king’s will, which to his good

subjects should be law. Next, and I grieve to add it, there is her own evil and shameless conduct. Is it not well known to every one here present, that Blanche of Navarre, who so long held a high and esteemed place in the sight of all men, after having been removed from the king's court, in order to keep her from the first steps towards evil, has since withdrawn herself entirely from the shelter which fraternal affection had provided for her, and has fled with her paramour, the Count de Foix, from the dominions and protection of her brother?"

More than once a loud and angry murmur had broken in upon the words of the chancellor; but those murmurs had come from the people—the States themselves were silent. At the words, however, "her paramour, the Count de Foix," there was again a movement in the crowd, in which the States also seemed to sympathise; and a loud voice from amongst the multitude exclaimed, "It is as false as hell!"

The monarch started on his feet, and made an angry movement with his hand; but the chancellor interposed, and pointing to the spot whence the sound had proceeded, he said, "Let yon traitor be arrested, who has dared to give the lie to his sovereign's solemn declaration before the States, that Blanche of Navarre has fled with her paramour, the Count de Foix."

"It is false as hell!" thundered the same voice; and a man, covered with one of those wide black robes common from time immemorial in the valley of Bastan, strode forward through the crowd, that yielded to him as he advanced; and, setting his foot upon the steps of the platform, and shaking his clenched hand towards the chancellor, he repeated, while the hood fell back and discovered his whole head and face,—*"It is false as hell! Degraded king!—base and profligate churchman!—I tell ye both, it is false as hell! I, Francis of Foix, here give you the lie to your beards,*

and hurl back against yourselves the base and degrading terms which you use to the pure, the noble, and the good !”

For a moment there was a pause of solemn silence ; while the Count de Foix, with his arm still extended and his hand clenched, his head thrown back, and his noble countenance flashing with generous indignation, remained sternly gazing on the chancellor and the king, as if seeking for new words in which to pour forth the hate and contempt which swelled within his bosom.

The king shrunk back appalled ; and the chancellor, though of a bolder and more fearless nature, surprised and confused, remained in hesitating silence. At length, however, he made a sign to one of the officers, spoke a word in his ear, and then, turning to the Count de Foix again, he said, in a low and not very distinct voice,—“ Sir Count de Foix, your presence here to-day may well, and certainly does, surprise us much. We thought, and had good reason to think, that you had long quitted Navarre. We were led to believe, indeed, and, as we shall soon shew, had every good reason to believe, that you had left this country, accompanied by the princess who has been so lately named. However, we shall soon have occasion to hear you at full, in justification of yourself, and in refutation of the charges against you.”

As he spoke, his eyes wandered round the hall ; and with his last words came a bitter and sneering smile. He then paused a moment, as if about to say something more—suddenly raised his hand, and exclaimed, “ Now ! now !”

At the word, half-a-dozen of the archers of the king’s guard, who had mingled with the crowd whilst he was speaking, and forced their way forward, threw themselves at once upon Francis of Foix, and bound his arms tightly with a scarf.

“ Noble Lord Count,” said the chancellor, “ you have most opportunely come to receive the just recompense of the

great and splendid deeds which you have performed in the kingdom of Navarre. The subjects of the king slaughtered by your hand ; his sister seduced and carried off ; his frontier-fortresses visited in the habit of a spy : these, and many other acts which can be proved against you, will call for punishment ; and, however high your rank, be you sure that neither station, nor renown, nor alliances with kings, shall shield your head from the blow of justice. Take him away !”

“King of Navarre !” said the Count of Foix, before they hurried him from the hall,—“King of Navarre ! hear me but one word. I am a sovereign prince as well as thou art ; thine equal in birth and blood : thy superior in renown. I tell thee, for what thou hast suffered this day, thou art coward as well as liar ; and, if thou hast in thy poor heart one drop of generous blood, thou wilt know how to answer this defiance.”

* * * * *

Time passed ; hours rolled on ; day after day went by ; and, chained hand and foot, plunged in a dark and solitary dungeon, denied the attendance and the care, the luxuries, the comforts of high station, almost the necessities of existence, Francis of Foix passed the weary time, till he felt that death were preferable to the protracted agony of such a state. The rays of the blessed sun he never saw ; the voice of man he never heard ; all was silence and darkness, except when, at a stated hour, some scanty food was brought him, and a lamp to give him light during the meal. He felt all the privations of his situation keenly and bitterly. He felt the privation of wholesome food, pure water, change of raiment, light, exercise, and air. He felt the privation of all the lovely sights and musical sounds which we enjoy in the wide world without knowing we enjoy them. He felt the privation, too, of all communion with his fellow-men, of all reciprocation of feelings and ideas ; and the heavy weight of his own thoughts pressed him down into the earth.

But it was not these, nor any of them, that pained him most. There was a more grievous burden upon his heart than any of these—a more overwhelming load upon his mind. He thought of Blanche of Navarre: he thought of her uncertain fate, her dangerous situation, the hourly peril to which she might be exposed, the base imputation cast upon her name, the weak violence of her brother, the fiery passions of her brother's wife.

For himself he entertained no fears. The King of Navarre, he thought, dared never raise his hand against a great feudatory of the crown of France; but Blanche of Navarre might be the mark on which all the jealous vengeance of the queen was to be poured. Of her he thought; for her he feared; on her account he entertained those trembling apprehensions which he had never known for himself.

He was soon roused, however, from his dream of security. A court was held within the walls of the prison; an iniquitous tribunal was established to judge him; and he was tried and condemned with that mockery of justice under which the violent passions of a barbarous epoch too often concealed themselves for the attainment of their objects. Astonished, though not daunted, he was led back to the dungeon in which he had been confined, and told that, with great mercy, the King of Navarre had determined to allow him two whole days to prepare himself for the awful fate to which he was doomed. In that short space of time, the design against his life could not be made known to any of his friends or relations; and, as it was intimated to him that his head was to be struck off within the walls of the prison, his fate might for years remain unknown to all but those who acted a part in the tragedy about to be performed.

Still, with the thought of his own immediate fate, mingled more painfully the memory of Blanche of Navarre. Still, he thought of her more than himself; of her grief, more than his

own danger. If in the power of her brother, or her brother's wife, he doubted not that accurate tidings of her lover's sufferings and death would be conveyed, to aggravate all that they inflicted on her; and oh! the dark uncertainty, the terrible apprehension, the deep sorrow, that he felt for her at that moment, when the last hours of life were ebbing from him fast, shewed him more strongly than ever, how intensely, how truly, how tenderly, he loved her.

Still chained, still solitary, he lay in bitter thought, with every feeling that can shake and torture our weak nature racking his heart by turns. It was night; at least, it seemed to him that he was in that part of his long, dark, uninterrupted night, which, to other men, was covered with shadows, and passed in slumber. It was night, then, but he slept not; and, on a sudden, at that unusual hour, he heard the key turn in the ponderous lock, the huge bolts undrawn, one by one, and the door creaked harshly on its hinges. A glare of light streamed into the dungeon; and, to his surprise, he beheld the beautiful but impassioned and unprincipled Isabel of Valois, bearing a lamp in her hand, and totally alone. She closed the door behind her, and the lock was immediately turned, shewing that some one waited concealed without; but for a moment she did not advance into the dungeon. Gazing on the worn and haggard countenance of Francis of Foix, she stood as if hesitating what course to pursue. But then, after an instant's pause, she took three steps forward, and, in a low, but distinct voice, which trembled with emotion, she said,—

“Sir Count, it is long since we have met; and how differently do we now meet to our meetings long ago!”

“Lady,” replied the Count, “I am here before you as a dying man. To-morrow, if I am informed rightly of the in-

tention of your husband, or of yourself—for it is you, probably, who rule in Navarre—to-morrow, then, I am to end my days by the sword of an executioner ; not the instrument of public equity, but the murderous tool of vengeance and injustice. Lady, I would willingly prepare myself to die ; and, though I might hear, with reverence and penitence, my confessor remind me of sins whereof I sought absolution, I would fain not hear them named by her who had a share therein.”

The brow of Isabel of Valois grew dark, and her eye flashed ; but, after a moment, the frown passed away, the fire of her eye went out, and a look of tenderness and sorrow came over her fine, but stormy countenance, like a sweet gleam of sunshine breaking across the tempest cloud. She shook her head somewhat mournfully, and answered,—“ Who led me to share in those sins, Count of Foix ?”

Francis of Foix felt and knew that her own fiery passions were the evil guides that she had followed ; but he was too generous to retort the truth upon her.

“ Alas ! lady,” he replied, “ let us not think of such things at such a moment, but to regret them. Why you seek me, I do not know ; but I beseech thee, in pity, disturb not the thoughts of a man who is preparing himself for death.”

“ I come, if thou wilt, to save thee from death,” she replied ; “ I come to offer thee thy life : but it must be upon conditions.”

The Count of Foix smiled bitterly. “ Lady,” he replied, “ I never yet was found fearful of death, nor weakly clinging to this mortal being ; yet I will not lightly cast my life away : but thy conditions must not be severe ones, for Francis of Foix holds his life as a jewel pleasant to possess, worthy of defence and to be valued at a certain price ; but that price

is clear and ascertained. It is worth so much, and no more ; and he is not such an idle spendthrift as to give one jot beyond the real value. May I crave to know what are the conditions ?”

“These,” answered Isabel, her brow again growing cloudy at the little esteem in which he seemed to hold her offers. “Thou shalt renounce Blanche of Navarre ; thou shalt never see her more ; thou shalt acknowledge publicly——”

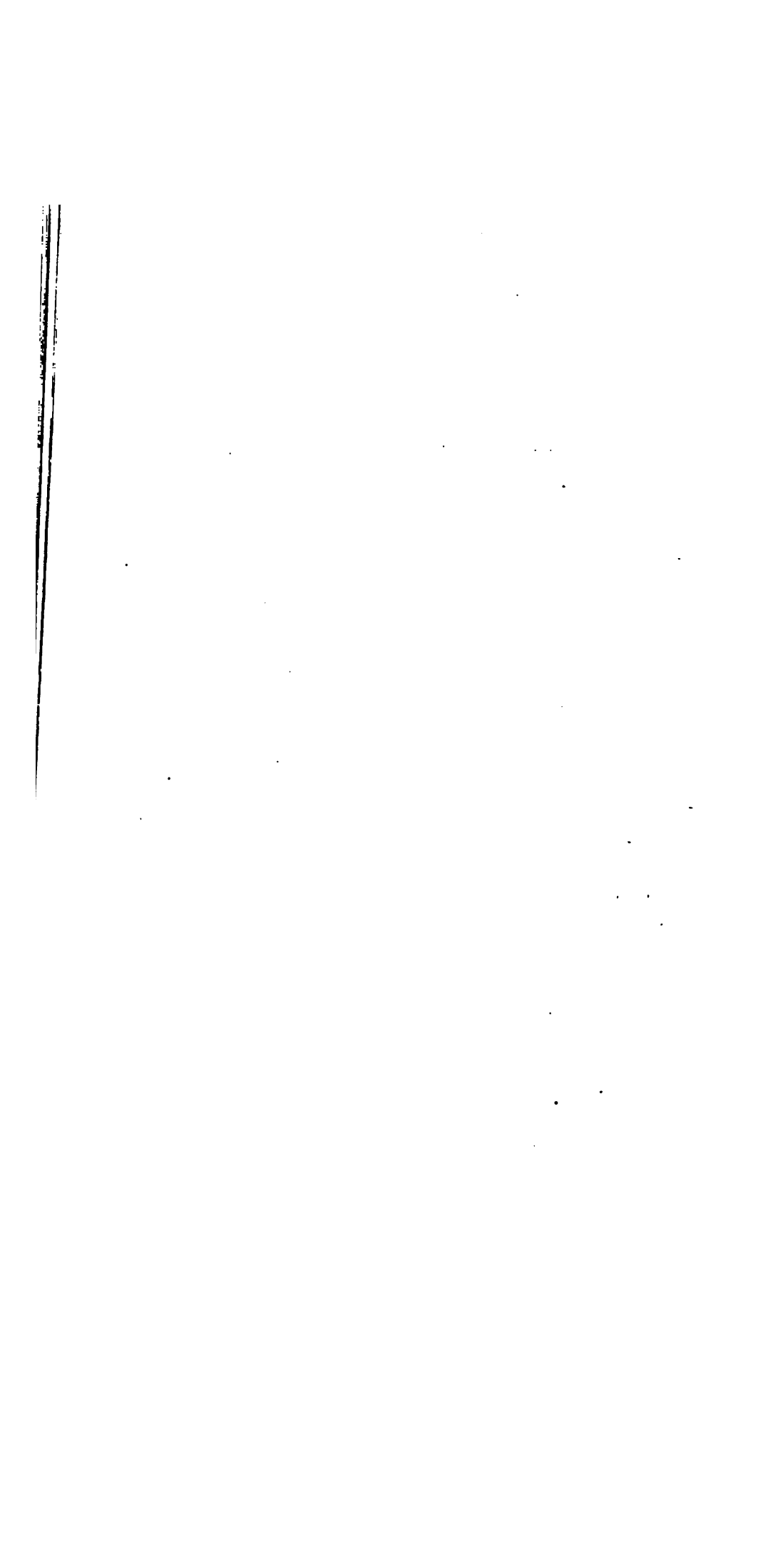
“Hold, lady ! hold,” exclaimed the count ; “it is needless to add another word ; it is needless to shame your lips, by giving them to utter one more unworthy demand. I will not renounce Blanche of Navarre—I will not promise never to see her more. God and my honour forbid ! If I live, I will love her ; and dying, I will love her also. Through every hour of existence, from the present moment to the last instant of the doubtful future, I will think of her, I will love her, I will adore her. The memory of her love shall give me consolation and support even in the hour of death ; and the moment when thy full vengeance triumphs over my mortal life, remembrance of her shall enable me to set your injustice at defiance. Her love shall give me strength and courage, her virtue guide me up to heaven !”

Dark and fearful was the expression that came over the features of Isabel of Valois. Her beauty grew like the beauty of the fiend, where loveliness was clouded with hate and with despair. But that countenance, all powerful and expressive as it was, could but little convey all the fiery passions that struggled in her breast: for an instant she gasped for breath ; and, then, exclaiming,—“Thou hast chosen thy fate ! be it as thou hast said !” she struck her hand against the door. It opened : but, before she quitted the dungeon, she once again turned to the Count de Foix, and, setting her white teeth fast together, she muttered,—“Thou scornest my kindness as thou

hast scorned my love; but thou shalt know what my hate can do. They have told thee that thou art to die within these prison walls; but I tell thee, no! thou shalt die like a common malefactor, on a public scaffold. Not one pang shall be spared thee: the grinning populace, the roaring crowd, the tall scaffold, the sword stained with the blood of traitors and of murderers, the hand of the common butcher—all that can make death shameful and terrible shall fall upon thee; and if in thine hour of death thou rememberest Blanche of Navarre, Isabel of Valois shall not be forgotten!"

He gazed upon her, as she spoke, calmly and sternly; and, on her part, after having paused for a moment in silence, with her bright eyes flashing, and her whole form enlarged with passion, as if seeking in vain for more words to give utterance to her hatred, she suddenly quitted the dungeon, and the door closed behind her. She stood in the long vaulted passage, where, on either hand, appeared manifold rows of arches, leading to many an abode of misery and horror, with the gaoler who had accompanied her to the cell, holding up a torch to light her footsteps on their way through those damp, mouldy corridors, and with the woman who had followed her thither, gazing up in her face, in order to read from the expression that it bore what were the emotions which her visit to the prisoner had produced.

Isabel of Valois, however, did not advance upon the path to which the gaoler pointed; and over her beautiful countenance she did not even strive to cast that ordinary veil which might shade or soften the picture of the wrought and agitated soul. The passions, the turbulent passions within her bosom were, at that moment, incapable of concealment or disguise. The moment the door of the dungeon had closed behind her she paused, and stood as if rooted to the ground, with her eyes bent down upon the damp gray pavement, and the deep lines of intense thought knitting her fair, splendid brow. Her left

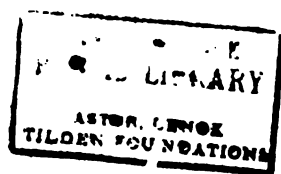




Thames, London

Thames

*"The woman who had been so long dead
had been pregnant and was now to
be born."*



hand and arm fell dead and motionless by her side ; and in the relaxed dropping of each long, slender finger, it appeared as if all power and sensation therein were at an end. But the right hand, which was rather raised, with the fingers clenched tight, as when she had struck it against the door, remained contracted for several minutes, while the same strong passion which had moved her in the dungeon continued powerful in her heart.

After a time, however, the fingers opened, the hand fell slowly to her side ; and, though the eye still remained fixed upon the ground, a change of expression came over the living picture of her face. The knitted brow again became smooth and sorrowful ; the white teeth were no longer firmly pressed together ; the proud nostril expanded, the lip quivered, and, clasping her hands together, she burst into a bitter flood of tears, only interrupted by convulsive sobs, which seemed to shake her whole frame.

This state continued for several minutes, while the attendant gazed on her with apprehension and anxiety, and the gaoler cast down his eyes in surprise, at a scene of which he felt that he ought not to have been a witness. It next became evident that she struggled against her tears, and strove to master the agitation which produced them ; and, as she found all ordinary efforts vain, she worked herself up into fury at herself, for giving way to the weakness that overpowered her : she stamped her foot upon the ground ; she struck her hand against her brow ; and exclaiming, " Fool ! fool ! fool that I am !" she turned violently to the woman, crying, " What stare you at, minion ? Dare you comment on the actions of your queen ? follow behind me ! Lead on, sir, with the torch ; lead on ! There is some gold for thee ; but thou hadst better tear out for ever from the book of memory what thou hast seen this night—otherwise

thou mayst find a surer and more silent dwelling than thine own dungeons. Lead on, I say ! lead on !”

The prison and the palace are, in all ages of tyranny and of barbarism, in near companionship ; and from the dungeons which Isabel of Valois had just visited, a long passage beneath the great square of Pampeluna, and a spiral staircase, led back to the abode of her husband. As she mounted slowly, step by step, the Queen of Navarre had time to recall all her courage, to steel her haughty heart, and to efface the traces of agitation which her strongly excited passions had left behind. She paused for a moment, however, in her own apartments. She carefully washed the marks of tears away ; she arranged her dress with studied grace and elegance ; she called to her aid every art of fascination ; and then proceeded to seek the weak prince who had placed his happiness, his honour, and his fame, in the hands of one so little worthy of the trust. He welcomed her with a glad embrace ; for of late she had been rather a niggard of her presence, and had taught her husband to value her smiles by making them more rare.

“Hast thou heard the tidings, my Isabel ?” he said ;
“hast thou heard the discovery we have made ?”

Isabel of Valois—like all human beings when excited by strong passions to pursue evil schemes—felt more than just apprehension at every sound and at every sight around her. Each change, each news, each step that she herself took forward, agitated her whole heart, lest some interposing hand should pluck her back from the course which she was determined to pursue ; and the words of her husband instantly excited fears that some unforeseen event might throw a stumbling-block in her course.

“No, sir,” she replied, “no ; I have heard no news,

I have heard no tidings. Keep me not in suspense, my lord ; tell me what has occurred."

"Nothing to displease or alarm thee," he replied, marking the change upon her countenance ; "it is merely, that my unhappy sister Blanche, that disgrace to our race and name, was seen yesterday in the neighbourhood of Pampeluna by a priest, who was passing through a small village not far off. It was said that she had sent a messenger to Don Ferdinand de Leyda ; and, not an hour ago, I had him called to my presence, and asked if such tidings were true. He replied, that he had received neither letter nor message from Blanche of Navarre, but that he doubted not the tale of her being in the neighbourhood was well founded. He promised, moreover—on my strict injunctions—that, if she sought refuge with him or with his sister, who was ever her dear friend, he would bring her to my presence."

"I love not that Don Ferdinand de Leyda !" burst forth Isabel of Valois, vehemently ; "I love him not—I doubt his double-dealing promises. Once already he has deceived and disappointed me ; and, if you trust to his word, you will find that he has some specious under-meaning by which he will break his engagement, yet keep his conscience whole. No, no, my lord : if you love Isabel of Valois, and would remove the stain from your house by punishing properly her who has incurred it, follow my advice."

"What wouldst thou have me do ?" demanded the king. "I will do anything in reason to please thee, Isabel."

"Thus, then, act, my lord," she replied ; "and do it, not to please me, but for your own honour's sake. Deal not upon this Count of Foix as upon a private enemy whom you remove from your path in secret ; but, judged and condemned as he is by public judges appointed to try him, let his execution be public, and in the face of day. Proclaim to all the land around, that on the day after to-morrow, at

the hour of noon, Francis of Foix, condemned to death for having entered your dominions with the semblance of peace; for having gone into your frontier-fortresses as a spy, and afterwards having in arms attacked and slain your subjects in the execution of your orders, will bow his head to the block, and undergo the sentence of his judges. Let this be spread far and wide; and, my life for it, if Blanche of Navarre be within hearing of the tale, she will come forth from her concealment to save her lover from the sword."

"Perhaps it may be so," replied the king. "But yet, Isabel, I fear to delay the execution, or to make it too public. Many of the nobles already murmur; many affirm that Blanche is innocent; and I fear that, did the French king, who is even now upon our frontier, afford them any encouragement to deliver his vassal, the Count of Foix, they might rise in rebellion against their monarch's authority. You know not these proud Navarrese, Isabel; you know them not so well as I do."

"Out upon the king who fears his own subjects!" replied Isabel of Valois: "I trust my husband is not such. Out upon him, I say! Call in your troops, my lord; exert your courage; summon round you those whom you know to be faithful to you; and fear not but that the traitors will fall down and lick the dust beneath your feet. Fie on it! the French king gives them no encouragement. Is not Charles my own cousin, near to me in blood and in affection? and, had he been willing to espouse the cause of this Count of Foix, would he not have done it along ago, when all the count's followers and vavasours were clamorous at the gates of Toulouse for assistance? Let it be proclaimed far and near, that the count suffers the day after tomorrow; and, without direct assertion, let it be insinuated, that the only means to save his life is the production of Blanche of Navarre."

"Well, Isabel," replied the king, "doubtless thou judgest wisely. Order all this as thou wouldst wish : but, also, take care ; and ever remember that many eyes are fixed upon our actions, and that we must not dare to stretch authority beyond a certain limit."

"Dare!" exclaimed Isabel of Valois,—“dare!” and for a moment she gazed upon him with a glance in which the indignation and contempt of her fiery and haughty spirit struggled with artful wile, customary self-command, soft blandishment, and all the subtle coquetry with which woman, weak in power, and denied participation of command, so often obtains unseen the authority from which man would exclude her, rules where she is supposed to be ruled, and tramples on the habitual tyrant of her sex. Art, however, conquered even passion. She cast herself upon the bosom of the king. She bade him think of his honour, where she consulted nothing but her own passions ; she bade him consider the claims of justice, while she sought nothing but vengeance. She qualified every evil wish by some glorious name, and she persuaded him to what she would, while he fancied that she but strengthened him in his own upright principles. Her schemes were approved of, her wishes granted ; and, when she quitted the presence of her husband, her whole step and figure were animated by the thought of having in her power her that she hated with undivided enmity, and him for whom her love struggled with her wrath in such a way as to make that wrath but the more deadly.

The fatal morning arrived. The glorious sunshine of that bright land spread over the whole scene ; and the awful scaffold, covered with cloths of crimson and black, was raised before the windows of the palace. Guards and attendants took their places round about. The gazing

crowd had gathered early, and filled all the square; and on a platform which was raised near the spot prepared for the coming tragedy was seen a chair of state, destined for the monarch of the land, and already surrounded by various officers of his household. It was some time ere the king himself appeared; and when he did so, all eyes were, of course, turned towards that spot; but the dull and heavy frown upon his countenance seemed gathered there expressly to extinguish all hope of mercy from one who had passed his life in idle pursuits, and who had the weaknesses of a gentle mind without possessing any of the redeeming qualities. The trumpets sounded as he appeared. The heralds summoned the Count of Foix, in a loud voice, as if he had been a free agent, to appear and answer for the crimes laid to his charge; and, in a moment after, he was led forward to the front of the scaffold, and the accusation and the sentence read before his face.

He was very pale. The rosy hue of health, which he had regained after his wounds, had faded away under long imprisonment: and an ashy shade, different altogether from the pallor of apprehension, remained fixed upon his countenance. His eye was calm and stedfast, his step firm and proud; no quivering of the lip betrayed the smallest agitation, no tremor of the frame shewed the slightest touch of fear, at his meeting face to face with The Great Enemy. He stood calmly, with his manacled arms crossed upon his broad bosom, while the charge and the sentence were read; and his eye wandered over the people, as if he listened but lightly to a matter unworthy of attention while the calumnies urged against him were repeated, and the iniquitous sentence which doomed him to the block was repronounced. When it was over, and the harsh and dissatisfied murmur had subsided, he addressed the people in a voice, clear but not loud, which penetrated to

the utmost extremes of the great square, and was heard almost by every ear in the silent multitude.

"Ye have heard," he said, "charges that are false; and ye have listened to, and sanctioned by your presence, a sentence that is iniquitous in itself, base in its motives, weak in its pretences, and alike unworthy of the monarch of a generous people, and the judges of a free and warlike land. But I am here, a stranger in the midst of you, with none to plead my cause, with none to defend my right: and although I might well calculate upon some one from amongst the renowned nobility of this country standing forth to do justice to the wronged and the oppressed, yet I forgive even those who abandon me in this my latest hour; and only beseech them to believe, that not only am I innocent of one foul charge brought against me, but that the sweet princess of your native land—the pure, the bright, the beautiful, the noble—is belied by the base accusations which have been spoken against her by the very lips that should have maintained her honour, and have upheld her fame. Oh, Blanche of Navarre! Blanche of Navarre! that which weighs most heavily upon this heavy heart is, that my follies or my vices—follies which thy wisdom has shewn me, vices which thy virtues have done away—should have furnished thine enemies with a pretext for blackening the unspotted purity of thy angelic name. Oh, Blanche of Navarre! Blanche of Navarre! if there be one good and noble soul that hears me, they will tell thee, when I am dead, that with my last words, with my latest breath, with the ultimate effort of a spirit born for other worlds, I did justice to thy purity, and died defending thee from slander!"——

There was a movement in the crowd beyond; there came loud voices and shouting tongues. The populace drew back, and opened a way towards the scaffold; and a hand-litter

moved forward through the midst, preceded by a cavalier in the simple robes of peace, but followed by a long train of men-at-arms. The King of Navarre gazed eagerly upon the sight, with feelings well-nigh approaching unto dastard fear; but his apprehensions were instantly relieved, when he recognised in the first of the train the person of Don Ferdinand de Leyda.

"Where am I?—whither have ye brought me?" said a voice from the litter, as soon as they set it down at the foot of the scaffold; and, at the same moment, a small fair hand from within drew back the curtains. It was the hand of Blanche of Navarre. Her eye first fell upon the multitude, who, silent as death, watched for some coming event; and, at the sight of the wide sea of human faces that swept around her, she shrunk back again. But, the moment after, the scaffold and its dreadful apparel, the block, the executioner, the guards, met her eyes—with Francis of Foix, chained and bare-headed, in the front.

The multitude was forgotten: deep, overpowering love, was all that she felt; all that she thought of was fear for him she loved. She clasped her hands—she gazed at him one moment in breathless agony: then, darting forward, she passed the guards, who opposed her not, cast herself into his arms, and wept.

A loud shout of pity and sympathy broke from the people; but it was scarcely sufficient to drown a wild and angry cry which came from a tall window above the scaffold, at which, also, a beautiful but fiend-like face was seen glaring for a moment. There were swords drawn amongst the people also. The men-at-arms who had followed the litter pressed on and surrounded the scaffold; and the king, pale as death, faltered forth an order to stay the execution.

"What is the meaning of all this, Don Ferdinand?" he

demanded, endeavouring to assume some portion of kingly dignity. "How dare you approach our presence in arms at such a moment?"

Ere Don Ferdinand could answer, another actor had appeared on that strange scene. Unveiled, uncovered, with her profuse black hair broken from its gatherings, and floating wild about her shoulders—her eyes flashing living fire, her lips quivering, her small hands clenched—Isabel of Valois rushed from the palace and stood beside her husband. "Give the word, my lord!" she cried,—“give the word! Strike off the traitor's head! What! will ye suffer him to escape, when one word will bring the sword upon his neck? Then I will speak: Strike, executioner—strike! Traitor, do you not obey?"

But the king again held up his hand as a sign to forbear; and Don Ferdinand de Leyda answered: "Let me beseech you, sire," he exclaimed, "on no motive whatsoever to suffer this matter to proceed. Give instant orders, let me entreat you, for the executioner to descend from the scaffold, lest the tumult go on to dangerous results."

The king followed his suggestion at once, and the movements which were taking place amongst the people subsided; though all pressed forward to gather, as far as possible, what was passing between Don Ferdinand and the king.

"You are in error, sire," continued the former, as soon as the executioner had withdrawn; "you are in error in regard to my having ventured to come armed into your presence. I am unarmed—I am without followers. These men-at-arms before you are the escort of your sister, the Princess Blanche, sent hither with her by your most noble cousin and ally, the King of France. I promised you, sire, that if, on her return, she applied to me, I would bring her to your presence without an instant's delay. I have obeyed you, and have fulfilled my

word ; but I am charged by the Dauphin Charles, who now holds the valley of Bastan with his forces, to demand at your hands, free and uninjured, his cousin, Francis count of Foix. He added, too, a threat, painful for a subject of Navarre to repeat, but it must be told. He says, that if one hair of the count's head has fallen, he will take the crown from off your brow before a month be over : that he will lay the whole land prostrate in blood and ashes, and not leave one stone of your capital city standing upon another."

The king turned towards Isabel of Valois, with his lip and cheek as sickly as a withering flower.

"Thou hearest, Isabel," he said,—“thou hearest?”

"Coward !" she burst forth, with frantic vehemence,—“coward and fool ! If thou wouldst deserve the name of man, put on thine armour, mount thy horse, lay thy lance in the rest, call thy nobles to thine aid, and then strike off the head of thine enemy ! Put thy light sister in some holy house ; set the head of this subtle traitor upon the gates to welcome his French allies ; and then lead forth thy barons to fight for their native land !”

"Madam," interposed Don Ferdinand, before the king could answer, “the plan is a brave and goodly one ; but, I fear me, it would not succeed.”

"Why not ?" cried Isabel of Valois,—“Traitor ! why not ? Thou tremblest for thy head ;—I see it ! Thinkest thou that all the nobles of Navarre are false and subtle as thyself ? Traitor, I say ! why not ?”

"For this simple reason," replied Don Ferdinand, taking a roll of parchment from an attendant who had followed him : “the nobles of Navarre, assembled at my house last night, hereby declare that they are ready at all times to aid their king in just and honourable warfare ; but they will not support him in unjust deeds, nor draw their swords to pander to the ven-

geance of a woman. Unless the Count of Foix be freed, and due compensation made unto him for what he has already suffered, not one of all the vassals of the crown will take the field against the power of France, so long as the crown rests on the head where now it stands. When France shall have avenged herself against those who have injured and insulted her in the person of one of her high vassals, we will defend ourselves: but we will neither abet nor screen injustice; we will not participate in murder under any form; we will not oppress our native princess, nor hear her fair, her virtuous, and her honoured name traduced, and then uphold the calumniator with our swords. Two hundred hands have put their names to it!"

"Hearest thou? hearest thou?" cried Isabel of Valois; her whole frame writhing with the agony of her passion. "Oh, do one manly act, and strike him dead! or let me do it!" she exclaimed, snatching the dagger from her husband's belt, and springing on Don Ferdinand de Leyda. But the wary Navarrese was prepared; he took one step aside, as she darted forward, caught the uplifted hand, wrenched the dagger from it, and cast the weapon, with a scoff, into the crowd. "Madam," he said, "your justice is somewhat summary!"

She stamped, she tore her hair, she rent the covering from her convulsed bosom; her eyes grew wild, the light of reason went out in them; and, with loud screams, and strange, incoherent blasphemies, she was carried away from that awful scene in the arms of her attendants. The moment that she was gone, Don Ferdinand de Leyda knelt at the king's feet.

"My lord," he said, "we believe that you have been deceived in many things. We pray you, for your own welfare, for the peace of your people, and the safety of your crown, instantly to command those bonds to be taken from the hands of the noble Count de Foix: to send him back in honour to

his own country ; and, as a compensation for the wrongs he has suffered, to grant him the hand of your fair sister, with such a dowry as the states of Navarre shall vote. See, my lord—see how fondly he still holds her to his bosom, even in those manacled arms ! Let the chains be taken off ; and, in pity, let the princess remain. Thus shall you merit the love of your people ; thus shall you turn away the enmity of your mighty neighbour ; thus shall you render your nobles invincible against your adversaries.”

“If such be the wish of my vassals,” said the weak king, “be it as you say, Don Ferdinand ; I will do anything to gain the love of my people. Nor do I doubt that I have been deceived in this matter, since you assure me that it is so. Let the Count of Foix be set free ; and as to my sister Blanche, I beseech you, let her repose with your sister, Don Ferdinand, for I would not take her back to the palace till I have argued the matter with my fair but somewhat hasty queen.”

Don Ferdinand could scarcely repress the scorn that rose in his heart ; but he bowed his head low, with all ceremonious respect ; and the king, rising, seemed to hesitate whether he should retire or remain. A word from Don Ferdinand, however, induced him at once to withdraw ; and the loud shouts which were bursting from the people, as they saw the guards removing the chains from the hands of the Count de Foix, only served to hasten the retreat of the king. With trembling hands, Blanche aided to unbind him she loved ; and Don Ferdinand, passing onward to the scaffold, grasped him warmly by the hand. Francis of Foix cast his arms, alternately, round his friend and round her he loved ; and, amidst the loud and gratulating shouts of the people, they led him down from the scaffold.

Repose and refreshment were necessary to all ; and Don Ferdinand would not suffer his friend to agitate the fair girl,

whose heart had been already so terribly tried, till she had obtained some rest in the apartments of his sister. At night, however, they all met again : and, in that same hall where, on his first coming to Navarre, Francis of Foix had spoken light and ungenerous words of Blanche of Navarre ; in that same hall where, two months after, he had in her hearing recanted his error, avowed his love, and defended her fame ; in that same hall, he held her to his bosom as his promised bride. The monarch had given his consent ; the nobles of Navarre had pledged themselves for the States ; and, with Ferdinand de Leyda and his fair sister, the count sat down to meat, seated beside her he loved. For a time, the emotions of their hearts were too intense for aught but silence ; but gradually, as their composure was in some degree restored, and as Don Ferdinand and his sister, with kindly skill, strove, by cheerful words and bland encouragement, to banish all the fearful memories of the past, Blanche was won from her silence, and was induced to tell—though the tale was, more than once, interrupted with tears—the story of all that had befallen her since she had parted with her lover in the mountains.

Oh, with what deep interest, with what intense emotion did Francis of Foix listen to all that she had done, to all that she had suffered ! How his heart beat, when she told him that the horse which she had ridden had been killed by the lightning, and the poor girl who had followed her nearly destroyed by the hail. She told, too, how they found refuge in the dwelling of a hermit among the hills, and how she heard afterwards that her lover had passed while she remained there. Then she depicted all her anxiety, all her apprehensions, all her efforts to discover him, or to give him notice of where she was : and then she pictured for him all the agony of her mind, when some of the moun-

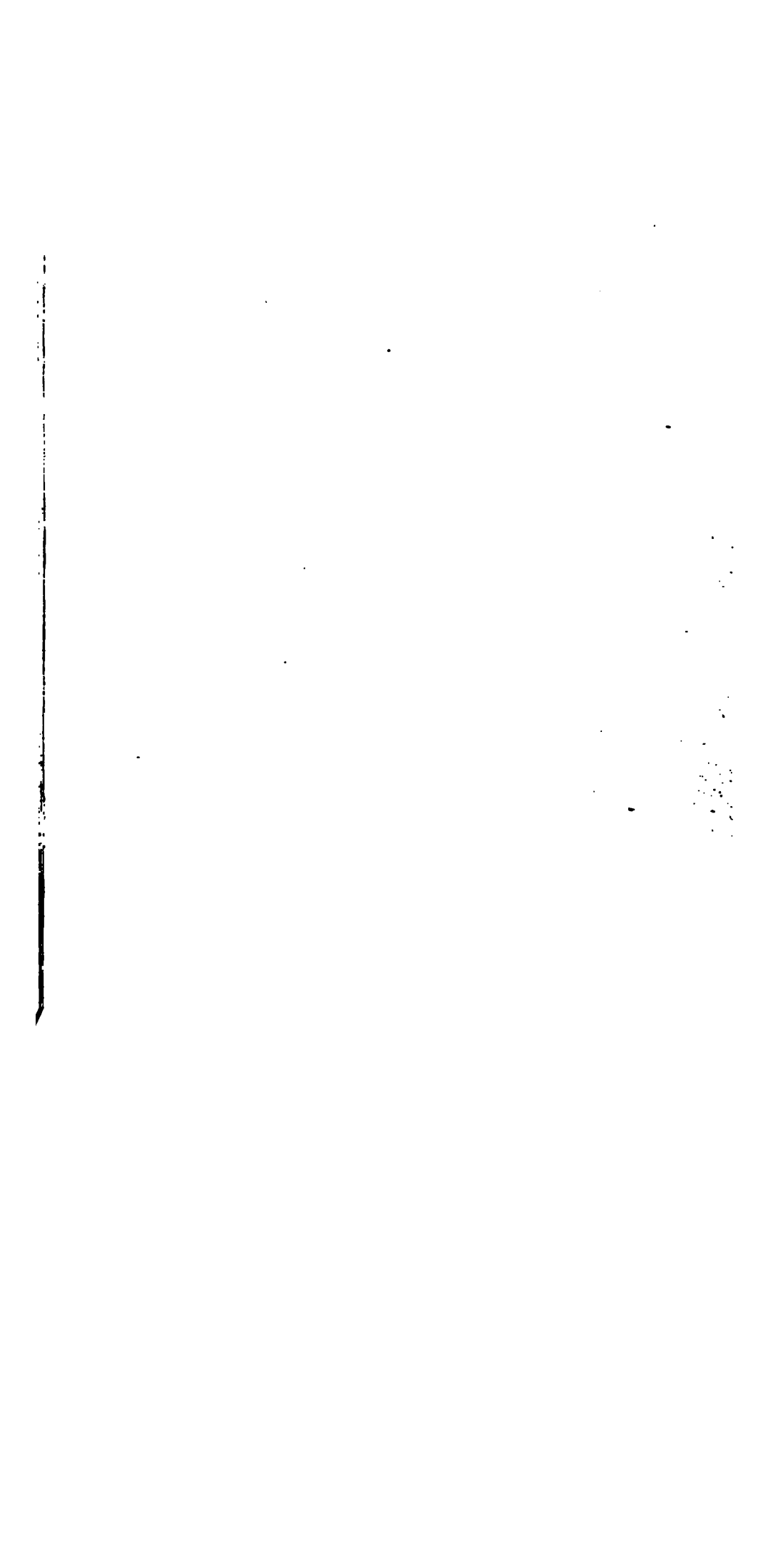
DESPAIR.

A SKETCH.

THE things which strike our own immediate eyes have a greater effect upon ourselves than those which we hear recounted; but less, perhaps, upon others to whom they are accurately detailed than fictitious narratives. With those who see them, they gain an impressiveness from their reality, which more than compensates for whatever they may lose by wanting the adjuncts of fancy; while to those to whom they are detailed they are deficient in the grand though vague garniture, with which imagination clothes every object left in doubt and uncertainty.

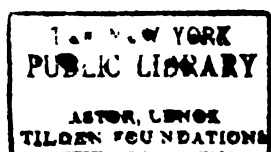
Not many years ago, while I was passing through the Tyrol, I was met by one of those severe storms which render travelling not only dangerous but disagreeable. The rain came down in torrents: but it was so mingled with snow, that the sight of every object around was lost in the drifting of the half-melted flakes against the windows. I could open the south-western side, it is true; but still, the thick and heavy falling of the sleet and rain prevented me from seeing anything but the dim, gray, uncultivated sweeps of mossy ground, which lay at the foot of mountains whose summits were hidden far in the clouds which poured the mingled

214





Emily



deluge upon us. After gazing, with an inexpressible feeling of dreariness, upon the dull aspect of a scene which, at other times, and under other circumstances, might have been highly picturesque and attractive, I perceived that we approached a deep gorge, broken by a transverse valley, in the lowest part of which I remarked, planted with careful irregularity, a great number of barriers and stakes, and obstructions of different kinds, evidently placed there to break the force of the torrents, as they poured from the hills, and to give the traveller time to hurry or retard his course, in order to escape the furious enemy that sometimes came rushing down upon him from the mountains.

There were two or three peasants' huts upon the high ground close by, and the people came forth to offer us shelter and beseech us to stay. But I could perceive nothing but a small and unimportant stream, winding its way through the shallow and rustling gravel, and I called out to them rather to help the carriage forward than to delay it on the road. The sturdy mountaineers, without more ado, placed themselves three on each side of the vehicle; and we began our progress across a spot which seemed, indeed, to afford heavy and uncomfortable footing, but not all the dangers and perils which they had anticipated.

I soon perceived, however, that, as usual, the inhabitants of the spot, although, perhaps, prejudiced, and inclined to magnify any dangers that really existed, were easily persuaded to encounter perils which strangers rushed upon without knowing or appreciating. The trickling of the water through the stones soon grew into a regular current, covering all the surface. That current mounted into a powerful stream; and then, as we advanced a few yards beyond, swelled into a torrent, against which all the power of the horses, and the men who accompanied the carriage, could

scarcely bear it up. I found that it was now necessary to take my share in the exertion, though I already had my share in the danger. Opening the door, I sprang out, and aided to support the carriage: but it still required every effort to keep the vehicle from being overset; and it was with a glad heart and relieved mind that I found the water, which had nearly reached my waist, begin to diminish in height, and the firm ground to grow underneath me.

Step by step we struggled on, until we reached the firmer ground; and then, with the peasants still accompanying me, for fear of further danger, I advanced amidst dim and misty mountains, looking more giantlike and vast from the gray shroud that covered them, till I reached a little village, the houses of which were surrounded by high chestnut-trees, and scattered on the bank of the river, the waters of which now gathered into a deep channel, flowed on, an angry and turbid torrent, towards some mightier stream upon the Italian side of the Alps.

The village possessed its little inn—poor enough, indeed, and uninviting; but the people who kept it were hospitable and kindly, and they eagerly exerted themselves to make the weary traveller forget the dangers and discomforts of the journey, and taste the sweet solace of the hospitable hearth. It is easy to forget discomforts, or only so to remember them as to make them enhance the zest of brighter things that follow. And thus, though the affair was homely, the apartment rude, and the accommodation, viewed with the keen eye of fastidious luxury, might have been found, in every respect, indifferent; yet few hearts have ever felt the pleasures of repose, tranquillity, and security, more than mine did then, when, sitting by the wide fire of blazing pine-trees, drinking the light Tyrolese wine, and eating the sweet trout from the neighbouring stream, I heard the winds howl without, and

the large gushing drops of half-frozen rain dash furiously against the shaken casement.

The twilight soon fell gray and chill, the lamps were lighted, the white curtains were drawn before the window ; and, though the latter every now and then waved in the wind, that found its way between the crevices, and the flame of the former flickered backwards and forwards from the same cause,—yet, as man's sensation of comfort is always comparative, the furious voice of the tempest screaming without still made me look upon my lowly shelter as a palace, and its thin walls as a mighty fortress against the fury of the storm. I lay down, thanking God for another day of mercy, and slept as soundly as under the gayest ceiling that ever overhung my couch.

When I awoke the next morning, however, the cheerless memories of the former day came back upon my mind, and made me think of the onward journey with no slight feelings of distaste. Ere I could make up my mind to rise, I arranged all my proceedings : resolving, if the weather should prove still unfavourable, to stay where I was : and, if it had grown fine, to hasten onward from that dreary spot as soon as possible. Heaven only knows why mortal man makes resolutions ; for, to resolve on anything with a degree of certainty, is to suppose in one's self that omniscience which is not the attribute of man. Who is there can tell, when he resolves upon doing any one particular act, that a thousand minute and trifling circumstances may not arise to change all his purposes ? Who can tell that the smallest, the most insignificant event, may not bring with it a train of mighty consequences, which will laugh all our fine determinations to scorn ?

As soon as I was up, I approached the window and drew back the curtains, expecting to see, at the very best, a savage,

marshy waste, flanked by tall, uninteresting hills, rounded and naked, and only diversified by crags, but little more interesting than themselves. Such had it appeared to me through the mist and rain of the preceding night;—a mist, not thicker than that mist of prejudice which, so often in our journey through the world, dims the brightest, and obscures the best, of all the good and glorious objects that surround us on our way. Now, what was it that I did behold? One of the most splendid scenes that the eye of man ever rested on. The window of the bed-room looked to the south-east; and wide spread out before my eyes was a valley, covered with the richest verdure, and diversified by wide sweeps of wood—the pine, the chestnut, the larch, and the beech. A bright mountain-stream flowed down through the midst; and I could catch it for many miles away, glancing through the forest—now smooth and shining, as it passed over some flat ground—now white and rushing, as it dashed in fury amongst the rocks—now one mass of dazzling foam, as it poured over the edge of some high precipice.

When I turned my eyes to the left, there rose, in gentle acclivities, sometimes covered with woods, sometimes with rich green pastures, the first steps of a range of gigantic Alps; which, like human life going on from maturity to age, soon lost the soft verdure of their earlier stage—put on the cold, gray sternness of the granite—and then, still further on, lost that firm, harsh aspect also, and bore up their dim heads covered with ice and snow. Pouring a flood of glorious light from their far summits, and dispersing the vapours which the storm of the former day had left, appeared the majestic morning sun; and, blue and indistinct beneath his rays, lay many a misty valley, with thin lines of gray cloud drawn across the gigantic portal which they opened in the mountains.

On the right appeared another scene: the opposite side of

the valley had offered one grand chain of Alps, only broken by occasional gorges ; but to the west lay scattered in wild and magnificent confusion, a thousand vast, but detached mountains—as if the Grecian fable had been true, and they had been hurled down at random by Jove, the mighty tyrant of gods and men, in some terrific contest with his giant enemies. In front stood a rugged cone, so vast so precipitous, that it seemed as if no mortal foot could ever have found a pathway to its pointed summit ; yet there, raised up by some daring and pious hand, was seen the symbol of the cross, appearing, though formed of two enormous pines, but a thin, faint line upon the morning sky. One-third of the way up too, might be discovered a little village, with its peaceful church, and an old feudal tower, scarcely to be distinguished, in the vastness of the objects round, from the huge masses of rock that encumbered the side of the mountain. Beyond the Mountain of the Cross, as it is called, and scattered still further down the valley, appeared a thousand other cloudy summits, of every form and shape, that it is possible to conceive ; while between them floated, like a dim sea, the blue mountain air, giving to the whole that character of wide uncertainty which affords Imagination scope to indulge herself in visions, vague but sublime. The extremity of the valley again seemed to rise in gigantic steps toward heaven, surmounted, as it were, by a wall of dark, jagged crags ; above which, again, rested a motionless mass of purple clouds. I stood and gazed for some time. I could have gazed for ever ; so bright, so beautiful, so enchanting, was the scene, as it lay beneath my eyes, sparkling with all the greater splendour from the traces of the last night's storm.

My resolutions of proceeding immediately were changed in a moment. There was sufficient to interest, there was sufficient to occupy me, for many days ; and amidst the calm

and happy people of that bright mountain land I determined to remain, till some new motive led me forward. During the first day, I wandered through the scenes immediately in the vicinity ; but, on the second, I went some miles further, with a guide, to visit a small lake in the mountain.

Turning from the immediate course of the valley, we plunged into a gorge to the east ; and, after going on for nearly two miles, found ourselves completely shut in between two walls of rock, so high, so near together, that the sun could never penetrate to the road over which we journeyed. Some two or three hundred yards in advance, I caught the glistening of water, appearing, to my eyes, to close up the path entirely. The guide told me, that what I saw was the beginning of the lake ; and, on advancing, I found that the road continued to wind along upon the southern side of the water.

Never shall I forget the scene that road displayed. The mountain under which it was cut rose almost perpendicularly for many thousand yards above it, so as completely to screen the lake below from the sunshine, except during about an hour of the day, in the very height of summer, when the sun, getting round to the north, poured a brief gleam of light upon the water, through a far-distant break in the Alps. The lake seemed less than half-a-mile in width, and some five miles in length ; and on the opposite side, though the hills there rose not so abruptly, appeared a scene of desolation and of gloom, such as my eye never beheld before. The rocks shelved down into the water, without bearing up one plant, or shrub, or tree, or blade of grass ; and only diversified by their own strange, rude forms, and by enormous crags of stone, which, rifted from the towering crags above, had rolled down and strewed the margin of the lake. The waters of that lake accorded well with the sombre scenery around : they were black as night ; whether from their extreme depth, or from the dark

precipices that towered around them, I cannot tell. So black were they, however, that I would not believe they were pure and limpid till I had dipped my hand therein, and found them quite transparent.

I stood and gazed around me with feelings strange, and melancholy, and awful ; and, speaking in a low tone to the guide—for it seemed almost sacrilege to break the stern silence that reigned around—I asked him what was the name of the place to which he had led me?

“ We call it,” he replied, “ the Valley of Shadows.”

Well did it deserve its name ; for shadows seemed the only denizens meet for such a place. Nevertheless, it was not altogether without inhabitants. At the end near which I then stood was the house of a fisherman, before which appeared several large boats ; and in one of these I embarked, and, rowed by the fisherman and his son, proceeded up the lake, contemplating the frowning features of the scene around, from the bosom of those dark, still waters. About a mile further on a second hut was to be seen in the midst of the most barren and desolate part of the northern bank of the lake. Not a vestige of cultivation appeared around it ; not a boat was to be seen upon the shore ; and the hut itself was only to be distinguished from the mass of rock against which it was built by the frame-work, of white pine-wood, in which the rude stones that formed it were encased. I expressed a wish to land, and see the tenants of so wild a dwelling. The boatman said I might land if I liked, but that from the man who dwelt in that hut I would meet with no welcome.

“ He has been there,” continued the fisherman, “ now nearly a year, and few of us have ever heard the sound of his voice. He is not a man of our country, though he can speak our tongue ; but he is either mad, or has committed some horrible crime for which he is doing penance.”

The account he gave me but increased my inclination to see the stranger ; and, landing nearly opposite to the hut, I advanced towards it and knocked at the door, which was shut. No answer was returned ; and, supposing that the inmate had gone forth, I turned back towards the boat : but, in passing, I cast my eye upon the small open window, and saw into the interior of the building. The sight that I beheld was the most painful that it is possible to conceive. I did not, indeed, remark particularly what was the furniture or garniture of the hovel ; suffice it that it was all most miserable : but nearly in the centre sat an object which arrested all my attention. It was the figure of a man about forty, whose clothing had once been fine, if not splendid, but was now worn and tattered. His hair had grown to an excessive length ; his beard, also, had not been cut for long ; and there was a sallow, sickly hue upon his face, which spoke either illness or utter neglect of his person : but the attitude in which he sat was the most painful point in his appearance. One hand rested on his knee ; the other, which bore a ring, apparently of value, had dropped by his side. His shoulders were bowed, and his head fell listlessly forward, while his eye was fixed immoveably upon one spot on the floor, with a keen, intense, painful expression, which spoke—in a manner not to be mistaken, even by the least practised observer of human nature—of a thousand bitter memories, and dark and melancholy thoughts of the past. Yet there was no madness in that eye ; there was none of the drivelling of mental imbecility about the lip. The eye strained, firm, fixed, determined upon the ground ; but there was no wildness, no uncertainty, no ferocity even, in that dark, steadfast gaze : the lip, though it curled with an expression that approached the most painful kind of scorn—scorn of one's self—neither quivered nor moved, but remained firm and unchanged also. The teeth must have

been close set ; and, while the whole position of the body gave one the idea of perfect self-abandonment, the countenance expressed, dark and unshakeable, though not grand and elevated, determination.

I could not resist my inclination to remain, and thus scrutinise the stranger through the window of his cabin ; though I felt that to do so was rude, and would have been ungentlemanly had I had ungentlemanly feelings at my heart. He moved not, however ; he stirred not in the slightest degree. No change came over even the expression of his countenance ; but there he sat, like a living statue, only known to share in the same warm existence with ourselves, by occasional long, deep breathing. When I had gazed at him for full five minutes, I turned and walked back to the boat, uncertain what to do, or how to act. From the state of his appearance it was impossible to tell, with any degree of certainty, what countryman he was ; but there was an impression upon my mind, from the complexion, the style of feature, and the clothes, that he was an Englishman.

Twenty times, as the boat rowed on up the lake, I asked myself what I ought to do. To see a human being in such a pitiable state, and to offer him no assistance, no consolation, was unworthy of a Christian—of a man ; and yet, to intrude upon him either aid or counsel might subject me to a severe and unpleasant repulse from one who sought and desired neither. I suffered the boat to row on, thinking deeply of what I had seen ; and, though gazing upon the tall rocks and gigantic mountains around, asking no questions, and offering no remark. Ere we had reached the other end of the lake, however, I had determined upon my course of conduct. I had resolved to force some kindness upon the stranger. I could but be repulsed, I thought ; I

could but suffer some trifling mortification of my vanity, which an hour's calm thought would obliterate.

As we returned, one of the accidents of the weather, furnished me with an excuse, however poor and insufficient, for intruding upon the solitude of the strange being who had so long tenanted that valley without holding any communication with his fellow-men. When within about a mile of his dwelling, a sharp shower came on, accompanied by some lightning and hail. Deceived by the fineness of the morning, I had brought no other covering than the coat I wore; and, though not much given to consider the caprices of the weather, I gladly availed myself of the pretext it afforded, and ordered my boat to row to land. As we reached the shore, somewhat to my surprise I perceived the stranger sitting upon a ledge of the rock, and gazing with meaningless eyes upon the pattering of the rain in the calm, glassy surface of that still, dark lake. Taking the rain for my excuse, I advanced towards him; and, doffing my hat with somewhat more than ceremony, I spoke to him in the German language, and told him that I sought shelter in his cottage from the storm that was coming on.

"Go in," he said, in the same tongue, but scarcely moving a muscle of his face; "go in: you are welcome."

I longed very much to say, that the shelter, without his society, would be but little valuable; but there was a cold repulsiveness in his manner which gave no encouragement to further words; and, though I wished much to have found even the slightest opportunity of luring him on to converse with me, yet the brevity and abruptness of his reply almost prevented a rejoinder. At length, after pausing a moment, and becoming more convinced than ever, both by his accent and his garb, that he was my fellow-countryman, I determined, if possible, to wake him from the lethargic state into which

he had fallen, by striking the magic chord of association, and, even by the sounds of his native language, calling up images, and dreams, and facts, which must be connected with the memories of his childhood's home.

"In England, sir," I said, speaking our own language, "I might hope for a more cordial welcome, ere I accepted of it. Here, the necessity of the case ——"

At the first sound of the English tongue he started up from the rock, and gazed at me from head to foot. "So thou art an Englishman," he said; "one of the wandering bipeds that make our nation contemptible throughout all the world! Nevertheless, there is something sweet in the language wherein all the early thoughts and bright dreams of the ideal, unreal period, of our existence were expressed; there is something beautiful and pleasant in the memory of the bright falsehoods of early hope. I believed Hope once myself," he added. "Why dost thou stand here in the rain? Hie thee in; thou canst feel no companionship with scenes like these."

As he had taken a step forward towards the cottage, I judged that if, without either persuasion or ceremony, I obeyed his direction at once, he was more than likely to follow. I merely bowed my head, therefore, and proceeded on my way; and, as I had anticipated, he seemed, mechanically, to come after me.

Having lost all fear of startling him by my first address, I gained greater confidence; and, finding myself standing with that strange and misanthropical being in the midst of his solitary abode, I said, with as serious and as stiff an air as I could assume, "I trust, sir, I am not intruding upon your seclusion." I wished to appear something more than ceremonious—even distant and reserved; because I believed, that the slightest perceptible attempt to force myself upon the stranger's confidence would be repelled with scorn and

indignation. I found him more easily dealt with than I had expected, however. He was, evidently, a man of high and polished manners ; and habit, the great viceroy of nature, acted with a certain degree of courtesy, without his even knowing it. He pointed to a seat, and, with an evident effort, said, "The storm rages severely, but it will be only of short duration. The rest of the universe has no storms like those of the human heart, which not only crush all they pass over, but endure unremittingly for ever. It will not last an hour. Sit down and rest, then : I have nothing to offer but shelter and repose."

I sat down on one of the few lowly settles that the place contained, and at first was about to reply, by noticing the destitute condition to which he himself so plainly alluded ; but I thought, the next moment, that it might give him a fairer opportunity of speaking of himself, if I reverted to his sneer at the wandering propensities of the English.

"You censured but now," I said, "the great mass of our countrymen for quitting their own land, and yet you yourself have followed the example."

"You know not the cause !" he replied, sharply ; "you know not the cause !"

"Nay," I answered, "nor do you know the cause of my quitting my own land. I may have had griefs and sorrows too."

"Griefs and sorrows !" he exclaimed, with a loud, painful laugh, that echoed through the whole place ; "Griefs and sorrows ! Drops of spring-dew compared with an earthquake ! Sorrows ? I have no sorrows ; nor griefs, nor cares, nor hopes, nor fears, nor enjoyments. All such things have long passed away. I care for, feel for, nothing upon the earth : the past and the future are all one blank, without a sweet memory, without a bright hope. I have left behind me every thing that had any

association with past times, and with the future I have nothing to do."

"And yet," I said, "the ring which I see upon your finger of course has some reference to happy moments in the former years."

"The ring!" he answered, with a slight scoff—"I know not why I wear it."

I thought—though without expressing that thought—that I could divine why he wore it; and I was letting fancy run on into a hope, that by the one memory to which alone he seemed to cling, I might rouse him from the state of utter self-abandonment into which he had fallen, when I saw him take the ring off his finger, and gaze upon it for an instant with a curling lip. The next moment he rose, approached the open window, and, to my surprise, tossed the ring out into the lake.

"There!" he said; "there! I will have no memories. I hardly knew that it was on my hand."

"I am grieved, sir," I said, "that you have done this; and still more grieved that words of mine should have occasioned such an act. I had hoped," I continued, "that there might be thoughts connected with that ring which, when your mind had time to recover its powers from the depression which misfortune has evidently brought upon it, might lead you back to peace and happiness."

"Peace and happiness!" said the stranger. "Do you use such idle, idiotic words to me? Do you talk to me of happiness—that empty vision, with which knaves lure on fools to do whatsoever they will! Ay, even to linger on through a long life of misery? Happiness is the idle vision of our youth; the bubble which we see floating down the stream of time before us, and which we still pursue from boyhood unto manhood: but he who is not cured of the

delusion ere he reaches middle life, is a fool, an idiot, a madman. I dreamed of happiness once, too; but that is long gone. The only state upon which a wise man can fix his expectations is utter despair: then, indeed, shielded in that adamantine armour against every pang; against fear, and care, and sorrow, and disappointment; against the pains of the body and the wounds of the heart; he may exist, with only the difference between himself and the rocks and trees around, that he is conscious of being and that they are not."

"But a man, ere he arrive at that state," I said, in a low and thoughtful tone,—for I feared, by shewing any curiosity, to cast him back into sullen silence,—“but a man, ere he arrive at that state, must have gone through much misery."

"Not more than his fellow-beings, I suppose," replied the stranger. "Every man must go through much misery, as long as he suffers hope to delude and disappoint him. Despair is the only state of tranquillity."

"And yet," I replied, "if a man have suffered much misery, the very memory thereof must interrupt the calmness of the state you speak of."

"He is a fool if he suffer it so to do," answered the stranger. "Experience should teach him that everything is idle, and empty, and insignificant; and that all those pitiful things over which he drivelled and doted were unworthy of a thought, an effort, or a pang. I can talk as calmly over my past life as any of the weak animals that go on from sun to sun, fancying themselves what you call happy."

"Indeed!" I replied. "From your manner, and many of your words, I should think that to dwell on, or recapitulate the events of the past, might be very painful to you."

"Not in the least," he said. "I am not such an idiot as to let them have any hold upon me. I could tell them all this moment. I will tell them all, if you wish to hear them."

Everything is indifferent to me : the setting of the sun is the only thing that I mark throughout creation ; for it tells the death of another day."

"I would fain hear," I answered, "how you arrived at such a state ; whether it be a happy or unhappy one. But still I fear that the detail might give you pain."

"I tell you, no !" replied the stranger ; "and I have no cause to lie like other men. I was born to wealth and station in our own country ; and when I think of my early days, I feel like a man gazing on the scenes of a theatre, which form a pretty pageant to his eye, though he knows them to be nothing but paint and pasteboard. I was brought up as most young men are—sent first to a private, and then to a public school ; committed the follies of boyhood, and fell into the vices of youth. I had what is called a good education. I had wealth at will, and, of course, the first thing I sought was pleasure : that is the boy's first bubble, and the one that he grasps soonest, and soonest discovers to be empty air. I was extravagant, thoughtless, idle ; and my father, who was fool enough to fancy that a son could be a source of happiness, was naturally pained and disappointed when he found me following my own course, as he had doubtless followed his. He sent for me from college, and expressed his determination of keeping me near himself.

"For some time I was as docile as a lamb, and expressed no wish to go away ; for by this time a new bubble had arisen before me. It was love—the brightest and the emptiest of them all. The rector of the parish had a daughter, an only child. The rectory was at the end of our park, and I frequently saw her as we grew up from childhood to maturity. She was not the most beautiful creature that had ever been beheld, but I thought her so ; and that was enough. She was pretty, rather than handsome—yet her form was

beautiful too, as well as her face ; and there was a simplicity, a gentleness, a tenderness in her nature, which not alone affected all her actions and her words, but seemed to spread itself through the movement of every limb, and over the expression of every feature. I admired her, I liked her, I sought her ; and, as her father, although his income was good, was an expensive man, who could expect to leave his child but a poor pittance, he was not at all averse to see the attentions paid by the son of his wealthy neighbour to his pretty Emily. I loved her, and she loved me : but my father's eye was upon us ; and one day, when I least expected it, I received his commands to prepare to accompany him on a tour he was about to take through some of the principal Continental states. Though I was unwilling to go, I did not resist ; but I hastened down to the rectory, to bid Emily farewell. She was alone ; and, though we had never before spoken of love, the secret of our hearts was now told. When we parted, she brought down that ring which you but now remarked, and gave it to me ; telling me, that it had been bestowed upon her by her mother not long before her death, with an injunction never to part with it, except to the man who was to become her husband. I took it, and placed it on my finger, and gave her another in exchange : but as I walked through the park on my return, and remembered the words with which she had accompanied her gift, I smiled ; for, though I had thought of love, I certainly had not yet thought of marriage.

“ My father pursued his determination, and we went to the Continent. We first paused in Paris ; and there, somewhat weary of mere pleasure, which I had tasted perhaps to excess, I plunged into the vortex, which, in the French capital, is ever whirling round to draw into one abyss of destruction all the unwary who approach too near. I fre-

quented the circles of the gay, and the bright, and the fair ; and I soon taught myself to believe—with many a pleasant lesson, too, from those around me—that there was no other virtue amongst women but a respectable appearance ; that there was no other honour amongst men but animal courage. My expenses and my excesses were both great ; and my father, in alarm, carried me on through Switzerland and into Italy, where I perfected my education in vice to such a point as even to grow tired of pleasure.

“Finding that his scheme was unavailing, my father quickly returned to England, taking me with him ; and after a season spent in London, where my proceedings were not calculated to give him greater pleasure than they had been in any other capital, we went back again into the country. Remonstrances and lectures on my conduct had not rendered the communion between my father and myself particularly pleasant : but on arriving at my native place, a certain freshness came back upon my mind like a breeze blowing, as it were, from the sweet hours of innocent youth, to reinvigorate the parched lip and fevered brow, aching with years of dissipation.”

He paused for a moment, and looked heavily down upon the earth, but I took no notice ; for it was evident to me that, in spite of all his exertions to the contrary, the memories of other years did still affect him much : and I was in hopes of being able, when he had done his tale, to draw something therefrom which might be balm to his wounded spirit, and bring back the erring and misguided heart to the hope of better things. After a moment of stern silence he went on.

“The change to the simplicity of nature, and to old kindly feelings, altered and softened me ; and my father often conversed with me with a smile. But amongst my first visits was, of course, that to the rectory ; where I found

a young officer in the army, a Captain Wilmot, a cousin of the rector's, who had distinguished himself in the last great action of the war. He had been staying some time at the rectory, and it needed but to see him by the side of Emily for ten minutes, to shew that he loved her deeply and well.

"Emily met me with a simple and an eager tenderness, that rebuked my heart for its incredulity of virtue. That eagerness, that tenderness, was not lost to the eyes of Captain Wilmot. He turned deadly pale; for, like all other fools, he had been indulging hope, and now met with disappointment; and in a moment after, he quitted the room to indulge his feelings in private. On my return home I found my father waiting for me, who asked me where I had been. I told him without scruple, for I feared nothing on earth, and concealed nothing that I did. He then told me, that to withdraw me from Emily he had taken me abroad; and that now, compelled by my misconduct to bring me home, he laid his injunction upon me, as a father, never to think of, or to marry her. I might have doubted; my conduct towards Emily might have assumed a baser character; but that interference with my right of choice instantly gave a bent to my resolutions, and I announced at once my determination of offering her my hand.

"Fierce words ensued on both parts. My father threatened as well as expostulated; but I knew that his estates were entailed on me, and threats only irritated my passions. Twice, while we spoke, he rose with a heightened colour, and walked quickly up and down the room. And once, evidently so moved that he could scarcely draw his breath, he bade me open the window wide. But at length, losing command over himself from the bold insolence with which I treated his counsel and commands, he strode towards me, and gazing sternly in my face, exclaimed, 'Dost thou know, wretched boy, why I forbid thy marriage with

Emily Wilmot? Because thou art unworthy of her; because vice should not wed virtue; because thou wilt break her heart, as thou hast broken thy father's! My curse upon thee, base, ungrateful boy!" And as he spoke, I saw him stagger and sink down. He did not fall, but gradually dropped upon the floor; and in less than three-quarters of an hour my father was no more!"

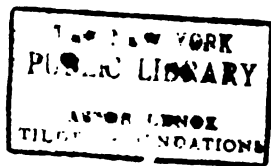
Again the unhappy man paused, and again fell into thought; and I could see, by the working of his features, that he was much moved, though he strove to conceal it. I still pursued the same plan, however, and took no notice; and in a few minutes he proceeded:—

"My father's death had some effect upon me. In pleasure, even at that early age, I had found satiety. If a father could judge of me as mine had judged—and that a father that loved me deeply—must I not be in the wrong? I asked myself. Must there not be some other and better way to happiness than that which I had taken? For I was still fool enough to believe that such a thing as happiness existed. I determined to try virtue—what men call right conduct; to deny my appetites, to resist my impulses, and to govern my passions. But, with regard to Emily, I had sworn on that last dreadful meeting with my father to marry her, and I kept my resolution. I kept it, not because I had sworn to do so, but I kept it from the deeper feelings that grew gradually upon my heart. I knew I loved when I announced my intention to marry her; but I knew not how deeply, how well. Mine was not a nature to feel anything without intensity. Whatever I had followed it was with passion—passion, the insanity of the heart! And day by day, as the time went on, bringing nearer the hour in which we were to be united, the fire and the profundity, also, of my love for her increased, till it was almost terrible to myself.

“Did it diminish after our marriage? Oh! no. It increased every day, every hour. For once I found gratification produce no satiety. I loved her beyond everything; and I was fool enough to dream, that in virtuous love I had discovered the magic secret of happiness—the means of catching the rainbow—of staying the bubble on the stream. Too soon I found that I was mistaken, that the very intensity of that love itself might become painful. It rendered me thoughtful, anxious, sad. I could not bear to see her smile upon another. I could scarcely endure that she should speak to any, or be spoken to of them. She did not comprehend my feelings. She loved me, it is true, deeply, well, with the confiding love of woman; but those things, which were but signs and symptoms of the intense passion of my heart, made her unhappy. She could not conceive that my love for her should teach me to deny her those innocent enjoyments, those virtuous recreations, which were permitted to other women. She fancied that it was a want of love or a want of confidence: and she imagined that I was capricious and morose.

“Perhaps it was so. If she were in a very gay or lively mood, it made me sad. If, from some mistake of my temper or my words, she went to her own room and wept, I became angry with her, perhaps angry with myself. Such things wore down her spirits and impaired her health; and at the end of the second year of our marriage, we both found the bubble broken. We loved each other as much as ever, but we were both unhappy. We had two children, a girl and a boy; and one day, after a scene of painful restraint on both parts, she came down into the room in which I sat, and advancing straight towards me, she threw her arms round my neck, saying, ‘William, I find that all my love cannot make you happy. Let us part. I will go back to my father; and, loving you still, will pray that you may be happier without me.’

249





*The scene is intended to be a representation of the
man and woman in the first act.*





“My heart yearned to throw my arms around her, and tell her she should never go; but by this time I had begun to learn the fallacy of all early dreams. I was not quite cured; but I had strength enough to say, ‘As you please, madam.’ And she left me weeping more bitterly than ever. The matter was soon arranged, and we parted. I settled upon her a handsome income, and sat down in my lonely halls a prey to disappointment. There was a want, a vacancy in my heart, which no ordinary things could supply. Love was at an end: that vision was over. The strong passions of youth, early indulged to excess, had left satiety; and I could gaze upon the lovely, and hear the fascinating, with a cold heart and a stony ear. I felt that if I were to live longer in the world, I must have some new excitement: and, with a voluntary determination of seeking a strong stimulus, I sought the gaming-table. For some months I won continually; and I began to feel that there was a sameness even in that. But then the tide turned against me; and at the end of six years of vacillation between ruin and fortune, I was a beggar. I had not yet learned my lesson well; and I thought at that time that there was but one relief for adversity. That relief I prepared to take. I ascertained, that the sale of my house in the capital, and the effects that it contained, would somewhat more than pay the last farthing that I owed. And as soon as I had made all my arrangements, I ordered the windows to be closed after dinner, and took down my pistols to perform the last act.

“They were not loaded; and while I was charging them, I heard the door open, and a step behind me. I instantly turned round, angry at interruption; but to my surprise, I saw my wife. She cast herself instantly upon my bosom: ‘William!’ she said, ‘while you were in prosperity, I could live on away from you; but I have heard that you are in adversity, and I must be absent from you no longer. I

have heard all, William ! I have been in London some weeks watching for the moment. It has now come, and I will never quit you again.'

"I could not repel such feelings ; and I was fool enough, I believe, to weep. 'You have come to a beggar, Emily, I said ; 'one who has not left himself a shilling in the world.'

" 'I know it,' she answered, 'and it is for that reason, I come. The income that you have settled upon me still remains to us. I have not needed one-third of it ; so that it is even increased. We have yet enough for happiness. Put away those pistols, William ; and come and see your children.'

"I was fool enough still to dream," continued the stranger, evidently much affected, notwithstanding all his efforts to conceal it : "but the storm is now nearly past, and I must abridge my tale. The children to whom she led me were lovely in the extreme ; and, though the boy stood back somewhat shyly from me, the girl sprang at once into my arms, and called me, 'Father.' A new vision took possession of my heart. My love for Emily was far from extinct. It was ten times more ardent than ever. But the love of my children mingled with it ; and, oh ! how I began to dote upon that sweet child, my second Emily ! She returned it with all the warmth and simplicity of her mother ; but the clouds were not to be long off the sky. I learned that Captain Wilmot had been a frequent visitor at the rectory while my wife was there. I learned that it was through him she had ascertained the condition into which I had plunged myself ; and, oh ! what horrible thoughts, and doubts, and anxieties, took possession of my mind ! Scarcely had my wife and children been with me for a month, when he dared to call at my dwelling. I was out ; but returned just as he was descending from the drawing-room. Had I met a poisonous serpent there, I should not have known more surprise, or disgust, or abhorrence. I

gave way to all I felt ; I put no bridle on my tongue ; and he left me, calmly saying, that I should hear from him again. I rushed up to the drawing-room, where I found Emily, all unconscious of what had passed below, quietly seated with her two children, aiding their governess in teaching them lessons of virtue and of truth.

“Two mornings after I met her cousin, with our hands armed against each other. He fell, and I survived uninjured ; and all the false and beastly sheets, which daily pour forth the stream of slander and of lies upon the falsehood-loving race of Englishmen, reported the event, coupled with a thousand slanders of their own, assailing my pure Emily’s unspotted name, and representing me as injured, where I was the aggressor. No care could keep the facts from her knowledge ; and she withered away more rapidly than it is possible to conceive. Ere two months were over, I laid her in the grave : and another illusion was gone.

“The boy had always deeply loved his mother, though he had shewn but little love for me : and, when she was gone, he would sit silent, and gazing upon me with his large blue melancholy eyes, as if there had been some sad question he would fain have asked. But he never spoke it. His health failed ; and, ere the close of the year, he had followed his mother.

“My daughter clung to me with deep and passionate attachment. We were alone in the world—we were all in all to each other. Oh, God ! how I loved her ! This was the last delusion ; and I clung to it most fondly. She was to me the whole, the sole, the last, the brightest, the most beloved, of all the things of earth. She was never absent from me. She shared all my thoughts, and I all hers ; and her very eyes seemed to have no other object on which they loved to rest except myself. I had never been much deceived by

friendship; I knew that it was but a name; but I had thought that there might be such a thing as an honest man, and that by great services I might gain some degree of regard. Such a man had I chosen to hold in trust the fortune I had settled on Emily. He died about three years after her death; and then I found that he had used for his own pleasures that with which he had been intrusted.

“A mere pittance only was left me; but I had still my child, and for her how willingly did I prepare to labour with my own hands! I fancied there would be a pride in it; I fancied there would be a joy: but I was about to learn the last lesson. We now inhabited a mere cottage by the banks of the river which flowed through the lordly park that had once been mine. We held communion with none; and the people of the neighbourhood marvelled; and sneered, and called us the hermit and his daughter. But that daughter was all the world—was more than all the world—to me. One day I went forth to the neighbouring town, to put in execution a part of the plan I had formed of labouring for my child. She wished much to accompany me, but I would not let her; and she clung to me as I bade her good-bye, as if she felt some apprehensions. I was not many hours absent; and as I returned across the bridge——”

The stranger's voice faltered, and his lip quivered, but he went on—“As I returned across the bridge, I saw a crowd of people on the bank, not far from the cottage where I dwelt. It was about half a mile down the stream; and my heart sank I knew not why. I paused for a moment to gaze upon them; and I saw them take their way slowly towards the door of my humble abode. I rushed on with the speed of lightning. I reached the cottage; and though there were many people round, I asked no questions. I felt that I was stricken! I felt that the last bright dream was gone! I rushed in—I

darted to my child's bed-chamber—I gazed upon that bed, where I had so often seen her lying in the beauty of her youthful sleep ; and there she now lay. But the cheek was pale, the eye was closed ; and though there was many a person round trying with vain skill every means of bringing back the drowned to life, the pulseless heart beat no more ; the breathless bosom could not be brought to heave with life's warm respiration ; the eye beamed no more with light ; the fire was extinguished ; the lamp gone out ; the untenanted dwelling-place cold, lonely, deserted ! It was all gone ; there was nothing else left on earth : and here I am !”

The stern clenching of his hand, as it rested on his knee—the eager agony of his eye, as it strained upon me, shewed that, for all his boasting, the memory of the past had power over him still. He felt it himself, and starting up, he exclaimed, “ Ay, thou seest it ; thou seest that I am not freed from fate ! The storm is over ; now get thee hence. Thou must surely now be satisfied ; for thou hast taught me that peace is not to be found even in despair. Thou hast taught me that privation of all hope and fear is not the privation of pain, so long as the demon memory pursues us with its fiery scourge. I am an idiot, a fool, a driveller, to suffer any one to disturb my calmness : to suffer any one thus to break upon the still, tranquil peace that I had wrought out for myself. Get thee gone ! what stayest thou for ?”

“ I stay,” I replied, “ in the hope of giving you a better, a more solid peace than that which you say I have disturbed.”

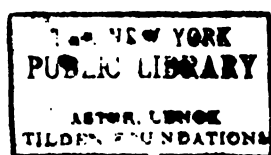
“ What peace is that ?” he demanded fiercely.

“ The peace of God,” I replied.

“ God !” shouted he, with a fearful smile of scorn. “ Think you I am such an idiot as to be deceived by dreams like that ? Fool ! fool ! I am an atheist !”

The secret of all was revealed, and I felt that he might well despair. Nevertheless, I would fain have laboured to cure his madness, for I can deem his state of mind no other ; but I soon found that it was in vain, and I left him for that day, resolved to return with the chance of a more favourable hour. I did return two days after ; but the boatman told me that his cottage was vacant, and that the stranger had not been seen since the day I had visited him. The opinion of all was that he had drowned himself in the lake ; but the body was never found : and in passing by that spot some months after, I made every enquiry in the neighbourhood, but could gain no further information of any kind.

236







HATRED.

I HATE him still ! I shall ever hate him ; although I am forced to abhor myself for that unaccountable, innate dislike, which I have striven to vanquish in vain, and which resists the power of time and circumstance, of benefits received and injuries forgiven. Would that he wronged me ! would that he had hated me ! would that he had troubled the stream of my being, rather than that I had disturbed and obstructed his !

We were scholars together at the University of Salamanca ; and, when I first went thither, I was directed by my father to cultivate the friendship of the young Count of Huesca. " These early acquaintances," said my father, " often influence our whole fate through life. He is a youth of high rank and powerful family, and has already succeeded to the station and fortune of his father, who was killed in the Low Countries. It follows, almost as a matter of course, that the highest offices of the state will be at his command ; and you, my son, who, I trust, are destined to raise the fortunes of your house, may, if you obtain his friendship, rise as he rises ; for you are not less noble than he is, though somewhat less rich. But it is not alone with views of ambition that I recommend you to cultivate his friendship, but for the advantage of your mind, as well as of your fortunes. I knew his father well ; and never did a more generous, noble, and courageous heart, beat beneath a soldier's bosom. His son, I hear, is inheritor of his

father's virtues, as well as of his rank and wealth ; and is, in all things, such a companion as I should wish my son to have through life."

I know not why, but, even before I had seen him, his praises sounded harsh and ungrateful to my ears ; and when I arrived at Salamanca, which was at a distance of two days' journey from our own dwelling, I felt a reluctance to comply with my father's counsels, or even to deliver the letters with which I was furnished for the young count. Thus I remained some days in the city without seeking him out. The University was, at that time very full, so that I could not obtain any of the lodgings usually appropriated to students. I got a good apartment, however, in the Plaza Mayor ; and, as I was sitting there, ruminating, somewhat gloomily, over my isolated condition in an unknown city, a stranger was announced, and followed the servant immediately into the room. He was tall and handsome—yes, I cannot deny that he was handsome. He was graceful, too, I acknowledge ; and had, withal, that air of dignity and self-possession, which shewed at once the high nobility of his blood. Before I heard his name, however, his countenance displeased me. His mother had been a Fleming, the heiress of one of the oldest houses of Flanders ; but the mixture of her blood with the ancient Spanish race of Huesca was apparent in her son. His complexion was fair and ruddy ; his hair, though beautiful, was of a light brown ; and his eyes, though dark, were not of that deep black which used to mark the house from which he sprang. As I have said, I disliked his countenance ; but I could not, of course, treat him with discourtesy.

"I am led to believe," he said, "that I see Don Juan de Sylva ; and I can but excuse myself for intruding upon him by saying, that I found it impossible to resist my desire of

offering my services to the son of my father's oldest and best friend. My name, I need scarcely tell you, is Ferdinand of Huesca."

With a cold and constrained air I thanked him for his civility, presented him with the letters I had received for him, and made some insufficient excuse for not having called upon him myself. He received the whole in good part, however, insisted upon my dining with him that day, and offered to initiate me fully into the course of scholastic life. I would willingly have declined his attentions, but I had no excuse ready; and my father's commands had been so distinct, that I dared not altogether disobey them. I accordingly went to his house; and I commenced my academical studies under the same masters as himself, and very nearly at the same point; for great care had been taken of my previous education, and I was not far behind him in any of the knowledge or exercises of the times. I found that he was loved and looked up to by all the most distinguished of the students, and that he was courted and admired in all the private society of the city.

Of course, however, amongst the young men there was a party to whose idleness and excesses his conduct was a reproach; and, consequently, he was as much hated by them, as he was loved by the virtuous and the good. Towards that party I felt, I will acknowledge, an inclination; not because I wished to spend my time in libertine revelry—for, though my passions were strong, I had been early taught to put some restraint upon them—but because that party was opposed to one whom I already hated without a cause. With that view, or rather without any view, but simply with the instinctive impulse which leads us towards those who are likely to gratify any strong and vehement desire, I made acquaintance with many of the young men whom I had heard

were in the habit of openly scoffing at the high-toned and well-regulated conduct of Ferdinand de Huesca. I found them all infinitely inferior to myself in knowledge, talents, and powers, both mental and corporeal. If inferior to myself, how much were they inferior to him ! And yet, I willingly and deliberately sought them in preference ; led on the more to do so by seeing that I might easily and completely put myself at their head, and become the leader and director of all their actions. The fact soon became evident, though not the motive ; and I speedily found that, both by themselves and others, I was classed with the libertine faction of the university. The noble friends of Don Ferdinand began to avoid me ; and, even at his table, spoke coldly to one whom they considered as no longer belonging to themselves. The count, however, continued to labour hard to withdraw me from evil associates, and to give me every encouragement to come over to the better side. One day, he even ventured to remonstrate with me upon the course I was pursuing ; but I turned fiercely upon him, demanding by what right he interfered with my actions ?

“By the right of friendship,” he replied.

“You had better assure yourself first,” I answered, “that I entertain any such feeling as would justify that interference.”

“Though you may be neither a friend to me, nor a friend to yourself, Don Juan,” rejoined he, “for your father’s sake, I shall continue your friend ; and the time may come when you, too, may value my friendship.”

“It is likely to be remote, sir,” I answered, and, turning on my heel, I left him. It was not long, however, before that friendship had again to be exercised. I laboured hard to distinguish myself among the associates I had chosen ; though, I will acknowledge, that I felt disgust at many of

the scenes through which I was obliged to pass. He, however, who, without vicious feelings, consorts with vicious men, and for any secondary purpose commits vicious actions, is sure to incur perils, and, perhaps, meet with punishment which those more thoroughly abandoned frequently escape. Our excesses were many; and the eye of the police was upon us; but we were, in general, so numerous in our excursions into the city, that we escaped with impunity.

One night, however, when more than half inebriated, a large party of us was hurrying along the streets, an unhappy girl, the attendant of some lady in the city, fell into our hands, and was likely to have been ill-treated, in a manner which I could not stand by and witness tamely. I interposed: and with two others less corrupt than the rest, rescued the girl, half-fainting, from the hands of my companions, and bade her escape, while we prevented them from pursuing. As we were struggling together in this manner, the corregidor himself, and his guard, came up, just as I had stumbled and fallen, in endeavouring to prevent one of the other students from following the girl. All the rest took to their heels and ran, except one of those who had been aiding me, and who now stopped to assist me in rising. The police were upon us in a moment; and while those who had been bent upon committing the outrage escaped, we, who had prevented it, were taken and lodged in prison.

The magistrates of the city were determined, it seems, to make a severe example; and it was intimated to me that my noble birth would not be permitted to shelter me, but that expulsion from the university followed, very likely, by some still more severe and degrading punishment, was the very least that I could expect. I would not have asked the intercession of Don Ferdinand de Huesca to have saved me from the galleys; but the other youth, who had aided me in

rescuing the girl from the hands of my companions, sought him out, and gave him a statement both of my situation and of my previous conduct. He instantly exerted every energy to prove my innocence. He went to the *corrigedor*,—persuaded him to give time for further investigation. He discovered the girl herself whom I had aided to save. He brought her before the magistrates of the city and the authorities of the university; and so completely established my innocence of any evil share in the riot which had taken place, that I was immediately ordered to be set at liberty.

Ferdinand of Huesca brought me the tidings himself, and embraced me warmly as he announced that I was free; but I shrunk from his arms as if there had been some deadly venom in their touch, and I hated him the more for having served me.

These events, however, changed my conduct. I quitted that society which I had never liked; my hatred took the shape of rivalry; and I determined to out-do him in all that he undertook; to thwart him in his endeavours for distinction; to carry off the prizes for which he strove; and to strain for every exclusive honour. Not that I had any ambition for such things myself, but solely to prevent his obtaining them. Had he not been there, all the distinctions of the university would hardly have tempted me to an effort; but I knew that he prized them highly, and I was determined to snatch them from his grasp. For this object, and to this purpose, I bent every energy of my mind and body. I studied night and day; I shunned my old associates; I affected little society. The sums which were allowed me by my father I used with infinite frugality; spending nothing upon my own person, but labouring hard to keep up as splendid an appearance, in all external things, as the man that I detested. My servants were clothed in costly gar-

ments ; my horses were as fine, and as magnificently appalled, as his ; and my own habiliments, though I affected dark and sombre colours, while he chose all that was light and brilliant, were not a whit behind his in splendour or in taste. Ere long, the change that had come over me was marked by all men. The heads of the university spoke of it with praise ; the society of the city courted him who in it had before been shunned ; and Huesca himself, though met with coldness, and sometimes with rudeness, persevered in acts of kindness and friendship towards me. It seemed as if the regard which he had at first conceived for me was not to be rebuffed, and only increased in proportion as I shewed a want of gratitude and attachment to him.

Nor was I unsuccessful in my academical efforts. I soon placed myself side by side with him ; and then began a struggle such as Salamanca had seldom seen. He exerted himself strenuously not to be left behind, and I hurried forward with all the eagerness of hatred and ill-will. I anticipated my triumph with calm malevolence. I determined not to assert it loudly, but to take it as a matter of course ; and enjoy in silence the mortification that he would experience.

At length the day came for conferring a high honour to which we both aspired. It could but be granted to one, and we left all other competitors so far behind, that every one withdrew from the competition but ourselves. We went on eagerly against each other ; and I could perceive, by the changing colour of his cheek, and the flashing of his proud eye, how much he was agitated and excited by the contest. Perhaps no two persons were ever more equally matched. I might have the advantage in some points, and he in others ; and, at the close of the exercises, I was doubtful myself to which the prize would be assigned. That very doubt was agony to me ; especially as I marked a hesitating expression

in the countenances of those who were to decide. Their consultation was long ; and some words thereof reached us as we stood before them, which shewed that they were about to decide in favour of the Count of Huesca, on account of his high station ; while they acknowledged that I had shewn myself in no degree inferior to him in abilities or learning.

Oh ! how I hated him at that moment ! He, however, had heard their words, as well as myself ; and, after pausing a single instant, with a cloud of uncertainty upon his countenance, he stepped forward, while the whole generous feelings of his heart spread a glow over his face, like the sun, when at eventide it scatters away the stormy vapours of an autumn day, and, addressing the heads of the university, he said,—“ Not to me ! no, not to me ! Well has Don Juan de Sylva won the honours for which we strove. I give my voice for him ! He has excelled me ; and, even if we were equal, he has more merit, being younger at the university than I am !”

God forgive me ! I could have felled him to the earth. He disappointed my hatred ; he deprived me of my triumph ; but the university yielded to his argument. The honour was conferred upon me ; and, as one fault ever brings on another, I was obliged to add hypocrisy to the rest, and, embracing him I could have murdered, to express my admiration of his generosity and kindness. I shunned him, however, afterwards as before ; and lost no opportunity of making him feel the dislike I entertained towards him. He did feel it ; but, acting upon a noble nature, it only seemed to grieve him, without producing enmity in return. That it did not do so, pained and mortified me ; and my hatred became angry and violent, instead of sullen and morose.

One day it burst forth, and excited even him to indignation. It was in the square of the bull-fights, when we were meeting to witness one of those exhibitions, that he entered,

splendidly dressed, and followed by a number of his friends and attendants. I had already taken my place; and as he was coming up in the same direction, a number of people of very inferior rank obstructed his way. He was proud of his old Castilian blood: it was, I believe, his only fault; and he was somewhat ruffled at the obstruction. He spoke courteously to the people, however, though with a flushed cheek; begging them, in gracious terms, to let him pass. One of his friends, however, who followed, broke forth more angrily, demanding whether they knew whom it was they opposed? I overheard it all, and a taunt sprung to my lips which I could not repress. "Make room for the Fleming!" I exclaimed. "Why don't you make room for the Fleming? you Spanish boors!"

The whole crowd took it up, shouting,—“ Make room for the Fleming! make room for the Fleming!”

His face became as red as fire; and, turning round, he exclaimed,—“ Who said that word? As I have hope in heaven, he shall answer me at the sword's point, were he my brother! Who said that word?”

Every one was silent; and all those who had heard me speak it, turned their eyes on me. Rising up slowly, I nodded my head, to signify that it was me; and as I did so, I could see that he turned very pale, as if he regretted the threat that had passed his lips. That no fear actuated him, I well knew; and, after having assumed his seat, he remained perfectly calm, watching the spectacle till all was over. As we passed out, however, he waited till I came near him, and then whispered in my ear,—“ At day-break to-morrow, amongst the cork-trees, down by the river. A sword is a good weapon.”

“ Exactly so,” I answered, coolly; and, nodding my head with a supercilious air, passed on. The next morning at the hour appointed, we met alone, and my heart beat

with feelings on which I will not dwell: they were like those of Cain. I had gained from him the prize at the university, however, by deep study and intense application; he, probably, had lost it by giving up a part of his time to those manly exercises for which all his family were famous. The event need hardly be told. He, always, in some degree, superior to myself, was now still more so, by constant practice on his part and want of it on mine. In ten passes he had wounded, disarmed me, and brought me on my knee. Had I been in his situation and he in mine, I would have plunged my sword into his heart. Instead of that, he sheathed his weapon, and cast his arms around me. "Juan," he said, "you have driven me to this! If you would have let me, I would have loved you as a brother; but you return my kindness with hatred—I see it clearly."

"We are not masters of our likings and dislikings, sir," I replied; rising and putting his arms away. "I do not pretend to say that I do not hate you."

"Then I will conquer your hatred by benefits," he replied, "if there be one human feeling in your heart."

"I am afraid you will take labour in vain," I answered, coldly; binding up my wounded arm with my scarf.

"We shall see," he answered, turning away. "You seem not much hurt, and at present not to need my assistance."

So saying, he left me; and we both returned to the city, where the knowledge of our quarrel, and the wound I had received, soon spread far and wide. The punishment he had inflicted on me acted as a warning to others of his own rank, and prevented them from repeating the epithet which had so much offended him. But, nevertheless, that name drove him from the city. The boys in the streets took it up, and, with the usual unthinking baseness of the crowd, though he had been a friend and a benefactor to thousands of them, they

shouted it at his horse's heels whenever he appeared,—
“There goes the Fleming! There goes the Fleming!” It was a constant source of pain and offence to him; and, at length, unable to bear it longer, he left Salamanca and proceeded to Madrid.

As soon as he was gone, a load seemed taken off my breast. That one strong passion, ever since I had entered the city, had sat upon me like an incubus, oppressing all that was good and noble in my nature. His absence immediately relieved me; I recovered the gaiety, the liveliness, the high spirit of youth. I was the first in every innocent diversion—the gayest, the happiest, in society; and people again began to wonder at the new change which had so suddenly come over me. None of them had the key to my feelings; and, as usual, the more they marvelled, the more they admired.

An incident, however, soon occurred which was destined to alter all my feelings, or rather to give my heart a new passion, and, by a brighter motive, withdraw my thoughts entirely from the darker subjects on which they had so long dwelt. I had one day gone out from the city to dine and hunt with an old friend of my father, at the distance of some five leagues; and, after a day of enjoyment was returning home with several servants who had accompanied me. My way lay across the country; and I rode on in a straight line without minding the road, lighted on my journey by the bright, clear moon of that land of unrivalled skies. Even when we came near the high road, I still continued on the dry turf that bordered it, as easier for my horse's feet; and I could see, at some little distance before me, a heavy carriage drawn slowly along by four lazy mules, making the best of its way towards Salamanca. I was proceeding slowly and thoughtfully also, and determined to linger after the carriage, and enter the city gates with it, which were by this time shut, and not likely to be opened without long delays to a

single cavalier. Thus I kept it still in view, as it went up and down the various slopes, with the bright gleams of the moon catching upon it through the tall old trees that there bordered the road. A solitary servant on horseback followed the carriage ; and as I could see him frequently turn round in the saddle to gaze at me and my servants, I amused myself with fancying the terrors that he expressed,—as robberies and assassinations were not unfrequent in the neighbourhood, and were, of course, multiplied by report into a thousand times more than really did take place.

At length, when we had come to a spot where the old wood, which once covered a great part of the plain, remains very thick, my eye lighted upon some horsemen galloping rapidly round over the edge of the hill above, as if to meet the carriage while it toiled up the long hill leading out of the wood. One by one, as they passed over the edge of the upland, I could see their forms distinctly against the bright moonlight sky ; and though it was impossible to distinguish their garb or weapons, I became at once impressed with the idea that the fears of the single servant who followed the carriage might prove much more just and rational than I had at first imagined. I counted seven horsemen, and there might have been several more ; but anything that afforded the prospect of excitement was pleasant to me : and, although at any time for the purpose of aiding a party of travellers against an attack of banditti I would have spurred on, let the odds be what they might, yet I now saw no such fearful disparity of numbers as to make me dread the encounter.

I accordingly somewhat quickened the pace of my horse ; but not so much as to excite any alarm in the people within the carriage ; and telling my servants what they were to expect, I bade them be in every respect prepared for the worst. We thus partly descended the hill ; and then halted

where you saw me to-day. It is a spot ever memorable to me, ever dear. I could thence see the whole of the opposite rise, and could come up without loss of time as soon as I saw the attack commence. But the robbers—for robbers they were—were quicker in their movements than I had anticipated. They rode through a path in the wood; and ere the carriage had emerged from the deep shadows of the trees into the moonlight beyond, they had reached it by a path cut through the extreme angle of the old forest. I could see nothing that passed at that spot, so deep was the darkness around; but suddenly I heard several voices speaking, and that in a tone I loved not. The brutality of the language used, and the high and blustering accent in which it was spoken, at once shewed me—for my ear was very quick—that this was no friendly greeting which interrupted the passage of the strangers. I accordingly spurred forward my horse, calling upon my attendants to follow, and snatching one of my pistols from the holster, I galloped down to the place whence the sounds proceeded. The darkness now favoured us; the sounds of many horses startled and alarmed the robbers; they could not, by any means, discern in the deep shadows which enveloped us the number of the horsemen that were advancing against them; and they determined at once, it seems, to abandon their prey.

Ere they departed, however—with that sanguinary determination which characterises the banditti in that part of the country—they resolved to give us a volley at random. A bright line of light suddenly ran across the road: one of my servants fell, wounded in the shoulder; and my own horse, after reeling forward for a few steps, dropped beneath me, mortally wounded. A shrill cry from below, however, called my attention from anything that was passing in my own party; and starting up from the body of my dying horse, I

ran down as fast as possible towards the carriage, which remained still stationary in the midst of the road. As I advanced I could see the freebooters galloping away across the moonlight; but the intellects of the servant who had accompanied the carriage seemed to be troubled by fear, and, taking me for one of the assailants, he implored me in piteous tones to spare his life. I soon quieted his mind, however, and advanced to the door of the vehicle, from which was proceeding a tide of mingled lamentations, that seemed to me more worthy of attention. It was the voice equally of mourning and terror; and, pulling open the door of the boot, I assured the party that the assailants had fled.

"But not till they have killed my Maria," replied a female voice within. "She is dead! she is dead! The only green bough left is broken from the stem with all its blossoms, and the decayed tree is left to wither slowly behind."

I soon found that the persons within the carriage consisted of three—a lady, somewhat advanced in years, her niece, and a female attendant. Immediately after the volley the robbers had given us, the young lady, it appeared, had uttered a loud cry, and had then become suddenly silent. Whether she had been killed, as her aunt's apprehensions led her heart to believe, or whether she had merely fainted, was a matter of doubt; but she was next to me, as I stood by the door of the carriage, and I took her at once into my arms, and lifted her out. Bidding the others follow as fast as possible, I carried her towards the cottage of a swineherd, which, as I knew, was not far distant upon the brow of the hill.

As I ran on, holding her firmly to my bosom, I began to feel something trickling down my hand; and it is scarcely possible to describe the awful feeling of anxiety and horror which took possession of my heart, as I became convinced that the life-blood of a young and gentle creature, who should

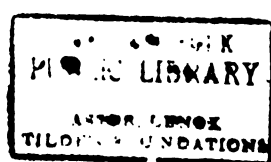
267





*"I took her at once in my arms, and lifted her up,
bidding the others follow as fast as possible."*

CHAPTER I.



have been shielded by her youth and her sex from all the harsh usages of life, was welling gradually away from her bosom, even while I bore her onward to a place where but little succour was to be obtained. Each step seemed long and slow ; each pitiful obstruction seemed a mountain in my path ; till, at length, I reached the door of the hovel, and knocked loudly for admission.

The swineherd and his wife started from their lowly bed to let me in ; and not small was their horror and consternation to behold the number of persons who surrounded their threshold under such ambiguous circumstances. A light was soon procured ; and, placing the inanimate form of the girl I carried upon the edge of the bed, I gazed anxiously in her face, while the swineherd held the light above our heads, to see whether life had really fled from its injured tenement, or whether there was any hope of recalling her to the warm and busy scene of life.

It was the most beautiful countenance I had ever beheld ; as, with the glossy black hair, falling back in clustering curls from the pale and marble-like temples, the whole, fine, expansive forehead, laced on either side with a single blue vein, and marked by the graceful line of the small, jetty eyebrow, was exposed to view ; while, on the cheek from which the warm colour of life had all fled, rested the long, sweeping fringe of the eye's curtain. I thought I had seen that countenance before ; but my own agitation, and the change which had come over it, prevented me from recollecting, till afterwards, that I had indeed seen her at a party in the city.

My whole attention was now directed to ascertain whence flowed the blood which had dabbled a great part both of her garments and of mine. The gory stains seemed to be deeper upon her left arm ; and, on examining more clearly, I found, to my infinite joy and satisfaction, that the ball had passed

between her arm and her side, wounding the former as it went, and cutting a large vein, the blood from which had trickled down my hand as I carried her. It was easily staunched ; but it was long before we could bring her back to life. The pain, the terror, and the loss of blood, had all combined to cast her into a swoon, from which all our efforts could only rouse her for a single instant, to fall back again more than once ere she was fully restored to consciousness.

Her aunt, who was the other lady occupying a seat in the carriage, was of but little assistance ; and the woman-servant who accompanied them, of none at all. The whole task fell upon myself, and, inexperienced as I was, I doubtless executed it ill enough. My activity and my zeal, however, rendered me a miracle of skill and promptitude in the eyes of the two women ; and when, at length, after lying as if for dead for well-nigh an hour, the young lady began to revive more completely, called her aunt by name, and told her she was better, such a torrent of thanks and praises were poured upon my head, that had I possessed the real Spanish quality of magnifying myself and all my actions to an unlimited degree, I might have fancied that I had combated giants, and overthrown windmills. The thanks and gratitude of the fair invalid, also, were not less exaggerated in proportion to the service I had rendered, as soon as she became aware of the circumstances, though at first she gazed upon me with some surprise and consternation, at finding herself upheld by the arms of a strange cavalier.

Before the whole affair was concluded, and she was well enough once more to take her place in the carriage, the dawn began to appear in the east. Nevertheless, the elder lady still appeared in an awful state of trepidation, which was only calmed by my promising not to quit them for a moment till I had seen them safe within the gates of Salamanca. I kept my word ; and on taking leave of my charge, the elder lady, who

appeared perfectly well acquainted with my name and circumstances, requested to see me as soon as possible at her house in the city, in order to thank me for my assistance ; and she gave me her name as Donna Isidora de Arquas. As soon as she mentioned that name, I remembered where it was, and under what circumstances, I had beheld her niece. It had been at a large party of pleasure to which I had unwillingly gone with the Count of Huesca, and from which, after a few turns through the rooms, I withdrew myself in abrupt silence.

I did not fail, however, to call at the house in which they dwelt before nightfall, for there was an interest in the circumstances of the acquaintance which I had just made, that lent an additional charm to the fact of having established a title to gratitude in one of the most beautiful, if not actually the most beautiful, of earthly beings. I thought of her often during the rest of the day ; and when I lay down to take my *siesta*, I could not sleep, for imagination constantly presented the picture of her beautiful form half reclining on the bed, half supported by my arms, and the fair face, in statue-like repose, lighted by the high-held lamp, and surrounded by anxious countenances, gazing expectant for the first signs of returning life.

As soon as the hour permitted, I presented myself at the dwelling of the two ladies, where I found them in a neat but small apartment, not very splendidly furnished. The Lady Maria was lying on a couch, still pale from loss of blood, but, to my eyes, seeing through the dazzling medium of association, she looked more lovely, perhaps, than she would have appeared in the highest and most florid health. Those dark eyes, which I had seen but for a moment after her recovery from her long fainting fit, now rested upon me with the full and tender light of gratitude. Though the assistance I had given had been in fact but small, the thankfulness of herself and her aunt far exceeded

the value of the service. I believe, however, that the manner in which it had been done affected them more than the act itself. When I had seen that lovely creature dabbled in her blood, I had felt towards her, acted towards her, as a brother or a father. I had tended her with gentleness as well as with care; and there is something in tenderness displayed by a man, which—perhaps from its contrast with its ruder and more vehement qualities—finds its way with overpowering effect to the heart of woman, especially where she is rendered sensible at the same time that it is united with courage and strength.

That interview passed, as may be imagined, when people meeting together without any previous acquaintance are cast suddenly into circumstances which break down all the barriers of ceremony, and render them friends at once. But, alas! there was something even more than this. I had not become a friend alone; I had become a lover.

The cold and the phlegmatic, the German, the Fleming, or the Englishman, might not be able to conceive how at the second time of speaking to her, and the third time I had seen her, I could become deeply, devotedly, passionately attached to Maria de Arquas. Yet I tell them that it was so; that I was from that moment as deeply, as fondly attached to her as man ever was to woman. It is a distinctive part of some men's nature to love and to hate at first sight, not as a matter of idle caprice, felt to-day and to-morrow passed away; but permanently, lastingly, for ever, with a passion that becomes part of our nature, and exists within our bosoms so long as the loved or the hated are in being.

I have heard—though I understand not such things—that slips of fine trees grafted into other stocks will live, barring any accident, so long as the parent tree continues to exist, and die when it dies. And thus is it with love or hatred grafted into my soul: it becomes, as it were, a part of my spirit, a branch of my existence, and remains fixed therein and unera-

dicable so long as the being from which it is derived remains upon the earth. I loved her then; nor did I find her love difficult to win in return. There was gratitude, there was tenderness, already for a basis; nor was I without those accomplishments that gain the heart of woman. Huesca, too, was away; and all the better qualities of my mind came forth and displayed themselves.

Maria's aunt looked upon me as the saviour of her niece's life, and doated upon me as she did upon her; but, with scrupulous honour, as soon as she perceived the affection that was springing up between us, she desired to speak with me alone; and told me, that though her niece was an only child and an orphan, the dowry she possessed at present was little or nothing. They had come to Salamanca, she said, to seek the restitution of a property which was unjustly withheld from them; and, as everything in those courts of law is corrupt, their only hope of obtaining justice was by interest. The influence of a young friend of theirs, she said, had been exerted with much success; but he had quitted Salamanca just at the critical moment when their fortunes were in the balance. Thus, if I expected wealth with my bride, she added, I must seek a wife from another house.

I told her in reply, that Maria herself was wealth enough for me; and, speeding away from her, I sought the sweet girl herself, and, casting myself upon my knee before her half seriously, half playfully, I told her what her aunt had been saying, and what I had replied; and holding out my arms as if I would have cast them round her—for I was very sure by this time of her affection—I asked her if she would give me all her wealth. Maria leaned forward, and suffered my arms to clasp about her waist, bending down her eyes upon my shoulder. A moment after I found that she was weeping, and I anxiously asked her why.

"I am weeping," she said, "that I have nothing more to give."

"And are you not enough yourself?" I asked.

"Enough for you and your happiness, Juan, I do believe," she replied; "but you must remember that you have a father, and he may think differently; nor shall I know a moment's peace till I hear what he does think."

"Oh! he will think the same as I do," I replied: "his is of a generous nature, my sweet Maria; and, besides," I added, "we will gain your lawsuit for you: your aunt says it may be gained by interest. Who was the friend that had nearly won it for you; perhaps my influence may be as great as his?"

"It was the friend in whose company you were when I first saw you," she answered; "the young Count of Huesca."

Had a serpent stung me, I could not have started up with a sharper pang. That he should have known her, that he should have seen her, that he should have exerted himself in her service, it was all terrible to me. I believe I spoke and acted like a madman. I railed against him; I spoke my hatred in plain terms: I declared that I hated myself for living on the same earth with him! The first thing that called me to myself, was the grief and astonishment which I beheld in Maria's eyes. I made some incoherent excuses, however, which she was quite willing to receive; and, though she shewed me, by a few casual words, that Huesca, notwithstanding all his high qualities and personal graces, was an object of perfect indifference to her heart, she never after mentioned his name to me while we remained at Salamanca. The very strangeness of my demeanour seemed rather to increase her love for me than otherwise. It added a degree of surprise to her former feelings, which feelings disposed her to think everything right and well founded that I did or

thought. Still, however, there was one subject that weighed upon her mind, and rendered the sweet current of our intercourse less happy—it was the want of my father's expressed approbation; and, although I would fain have lingered on enjoying that society, every moment of which was as a precious jewel to me, she, at length, persuaded me, at the end of a month, to set out, in order to ask in person my father's consent to our union. I accordingly proceeded to his house as rapidly as possible, though the feuds of the succession, which then desolated the land, rendered the journey somewhat perilous, and obliged me to pursue a circuitous route. My father received me with open arms—for the tidings of my academical successes had reached him; but when I came to speak of Maria, his brow grew thoughtful and unpropitious.

"The family," he said, turning to that point of which a Castilian first thinks,—“the family is pure and noble; but you say that there is no dowry. That is unfortunate; we are bound, my son, to think of such things; yet the family is pure and noble: I know it well; no Moorish blood mingles in their veins; but it is a matter which must have mature thought. You shall stay here a week, and at the end of that time I will give you my answer.”

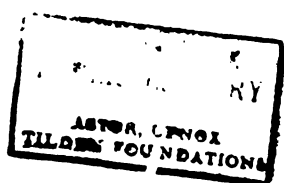
I would fain have abridged his consideration, but he was not to be moved; and, at the end of that time, he told me that he had decided against my wishes. It was in vain that I remonstrated, in vain that I expressed my determination never to wed another. He would hear no reply; and only so far mitigated his resolution as to declare, that if at the end of five years my feelings remained the same, he would no further oppose me. Remonstrance gave way to anger; and I told him that I should immediately return to Salamanca. He replied coolly, that I might do as I pleased; and the next day I set out. But, on my arrival at that city,

I had good reason to believe that my father had been beforehand with me. I found that one of his servants was already in Salamanca ; and on going to the house of Donna Isidora, the apartments were vacant ; the aunt and niece had both departed from the city, and had left no trace whatsoever of where they were to be heard of.

The bursts of passion to which I gave way were wild and foolish ; but I soon recovered from them ; and I exerted myself, as far as possible, to obtain the slightest information which might lead me to Maria's new place of abode. At length I went to the courts of law : I sought out the records of their cause : I discovered the name of their advocate ; and, thinking they must have left their address with him, I went to demand it. The man of law stared at me, told me that he had pleaded according to his instructions—had received his fees, and knew nothing more of the matter. Some vague suspicion, however, led me to pursue them through the whole kingdom of Leon ; but in vain. And then, again, a report I received took me to Murcia, but my search was vain in both ; and I returned to Salamanca gloomy, desponding, miserable.

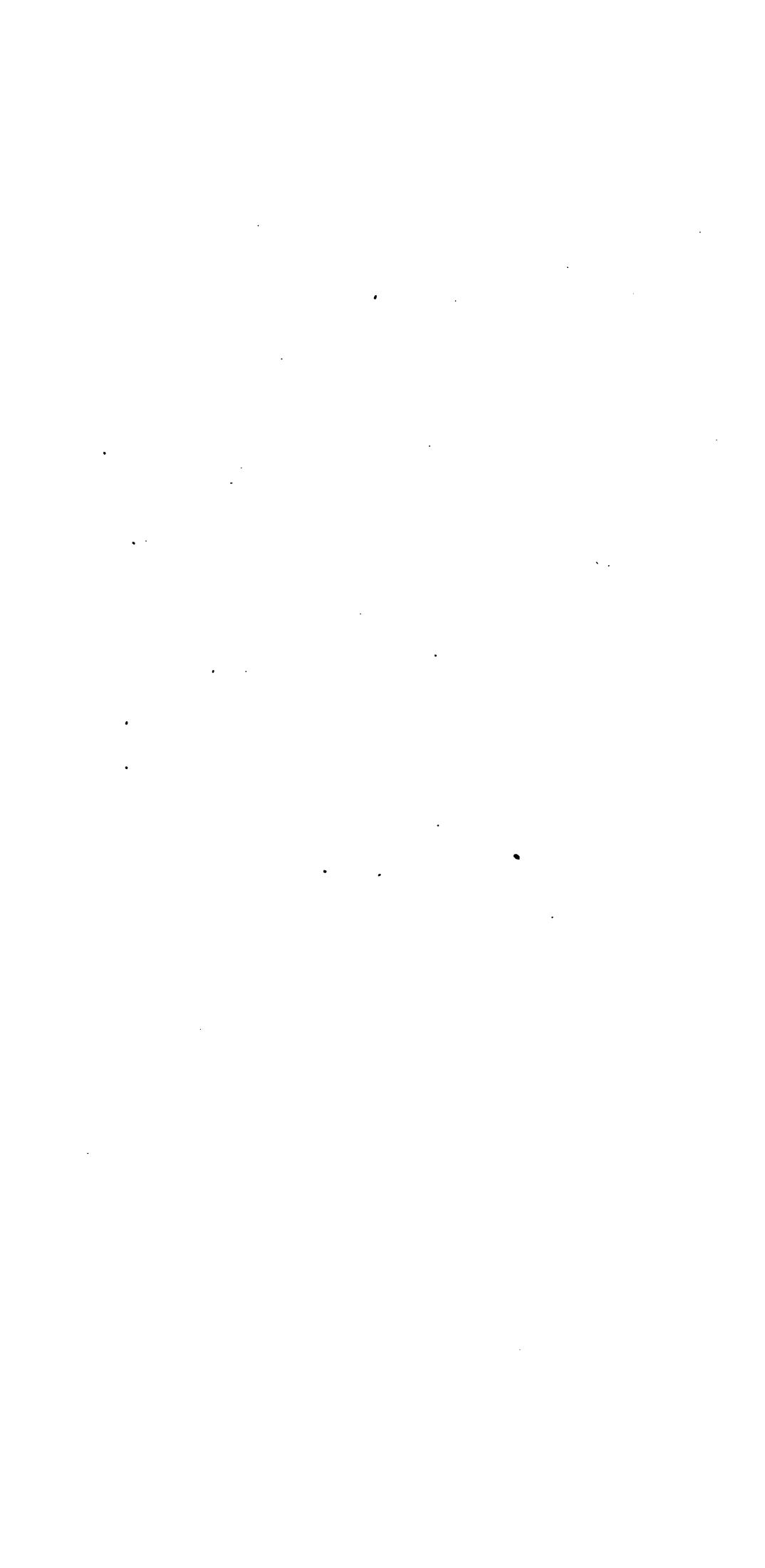
For more than a year I passed my time in a state of mind impossible to describe ; thinking but of one subject, and forgetting, almost altogether, that there was any but one person on the earth beside myself. At the end of that time I was surprised by receiving a large packet, sealed with the seals of the government ; and on opening it, I found that it was a commission, appointing me governor of the small town and little district of Penasco. They might as well have called the officer alcaide as governor, for the town was unfortified, and the situation required no military experience ; but the higher title implied a higher revenue, and was also more gratifying to family pride. No event that had ever occurred to me had given me more sincere satisfaction ; and, eager to avail myself

277





*It is a great pity that the world is so full of
people who are so much in the dark.*





of it, I wrote to my father, with whom my correspondence of late had been more slender than it should have been, inquiring, in terms of much gratitude, if it were to his exertions that I owed such an appointment. He replied in the negative; congratulating me, however, thereupon, as the first step to much higher honours and emoluments.

I must confess, indeed, that I was not displeased to hear that my father's influence and interest was in no degree the cause of my advancement. His conduct in regard to Maria de Arquas still rankled in my mind. I was still resolved to find out her dwelling, if it were to be found in Spain; and having now the means of supporting her, independent of my father,—having reached an age and obtained a station which set me free of his authority, I fully determined to offer her my hand as soon as ever I had discovered her abode.

With such thoughts and such hopes animating my heart, I set out for Madrid, in order personally to offer my thanks to the minister for the boon he had conferred. The very moment of my arrival, however, an incident occurred which led my thoughts into a new channel. My eye fell upon a girl tripping along the shady side of the street, and I instantly recognised the servant whom I had once aided in rescuing from the hands of some of my dissolute companions. She, also, it appeared, remembered me: and I stopped my horse to speak to her. She told me that she was now well placed in the service of two ladies; and on asking their names, with a sudden feeling of curiosity—excited by what I do not know—she replied that she was in the house of Donna Isidora de Arquas.

My agitation and delight may well be imagined: concealing it, however, as far as I could, I inquired where they resided, but enjoined her strongly not to tell them that she had seen me in Madrid. She promised to be discreet; and I

proceeded the next morning early to the levee of the minister, far more agitated with the thought of the visit I had determined to make afterwards, than with the interview which I was about to have with one on whom my fortunes so much depended. After undergoing all the trouble and delay which attends the obtaining an audience of great men, I was admitted, and returned my thanks as warmly as I could.

The minister replied, shortly, that I was not in the least indebted to him. That, in the first place, the distinction that I had obtained at Salamanca was in itself a strong recommendation; and that added thereunto, the earnest solicitation of his young friend and relative, the Count of Huesca, would have been quite sufficient to obtain even a higher appointment, had my age and degree of experience justified him in giving me such. I must have turned very pale, for the minister remarked it, saying—"You are unwell, Don Juan: perhaps a little agitated with this business. Retire for the present, and come to me again some other day, when I will give you any instructions which I may think necessary for your guidance in your new office."

I accordingly quitted him, and hurried on through the streets with strange and mingled passions in my heart. Never was my hatred of Ferdinand of Huesca more keen and intense than at that moment. I felt as if he had robbed me of the office he had solicited for me; I felt that what he had done was an injury rather than a benefit.

"He knew well that I would never accept it at his hands," I cried; "and he only sought it to give me bright hopes, and then dash them from my grasp. Grateful? Grateful to him?" I continued; "I would rather stab myself to the heart, than be under an obligation to him for anything."

In this frame of mind I sought out the street in which Donna Isidora and her niece resided. I was admitted without

giving my name, and entered the apartment in which they were sitting. Maria was much paler than when last I had seen her ; and there was a sweet, calm, melancholy lustre in her eyes, which spoke at once to my heart, and told me that she had not forgotten.

The moment the door opened she lifted her face from her embroidery, gazed upon me for a moment, and then gave way to the impulse of her heart. She sprang forward, she cast herself into my arms, threw hers around my neck, and wept upon my bosom.

Her worthy aunt seemed strangely affected by contending emotions of pleasure at seeing me, and of apprehension in regard to doing what was wrong. She one moment embraced me, and the next told me that she had promised my father to avoid me as far as possible. They had heard, she added, that I had been appointed governor of Penasco ; and she hoped that the fact had made some change in my father's determination

The very name of the appointment called up again all the angry feelings of my heart ; and I replied, sharply, that I had indeed been appointed governor of Penasco, but that I intended instantly to resign it. Maria and her aunt gazed at me with surprise, and the latter demanded—" Why ?"

" Because," I answered, " it was solicited for me by a man I hate ; and to whom I would not be obliged for a mouthful of bread if I were starving !"

Maria gazed with melancholy earnestness in my face for a moment as I uttered these words, and then cast down her eyes, which filled rapidly with tears. To change the subject, however, I told them all the pain, all the agony, I had suffered in consequence of their abrupt departure from Salamanca. I told them of the journeys I had taken in search of them, and dwelt upon the long hours of pain and anxiety

which had filled up the space since last we met. While we were yet speaking, some old ladies of the court came in to pay a ceremonious visit. With such feelings as were then busy at my heart, I could not bear to be interrupted by the drivelling commonplaces of two chattering gossips; and, rising hastily, almost as soon as they had opened their mouths, I took my leave, telling Maria, in an under voice, that I would see her again on the following morning. In the meanwhile I returned to my inn and wrote to the minister, resigning the appointment he had given me, without assigning any cause. He took no further notice, and probably treated my conduct with contempt; but in a few hours I received a note to the following effect:—

“By your actions of this day I see you hate me still; but if you supposed that I solicited for you the post of governor of Penasco with a view of gratifying my own vanity by conferring an obligation on you, you were wrong. I never intended that my application for it should have come to your ears, and the minister had promised not to mention the fact—a promise which he unfortunately forgot. Be wise, Juan—recall your resignation: receive a post that was asked for you by a friend with the most friendly feelings, and do not attempt to crush any further the regard and affection of

“FERDINAND OF HUESCA.”

I tore the note into a thousand pieces, and trod it under my feet; and during the rest of the evening, I walked through that gay city like some restless spirit, bearing my curse about with me. The next morning, as early as possible, I proceeded to the house of Donna Isidora, but a new and bitter disappointment awaited me. They were all gone. Remembering the promise she had made to my father, she

had once more quitted her dwelling, taking her niece and all her servants with her. For a fortnight I remained in Madrid, endeavouring to ascertain whether she was still in that city ; and then setting out I once more travelled from province to province, and city to city, endeavouring to discover the abode of her I loved, but in vain.

At length it so happened that I fell in with the army in Catalonia, which was endeavouring to maintain the cause of the house of Austria in its struggle against the Bourbon branch of our royal family. My father was attached to the opposite party ; but Ferdinand of Huesca was attached to the Bourbon's also ; and I believe that fact—even more than the solicitations of some of my friends, whom I met with in the Austrian faction—induced me to join the party of Charles, and accept a commission in his service.

A detail of the events of the next three years would be merely a history of the war during that period. But at length, upon the frontiers of Arragon, I was wounded severely and taken prisoner in a skirmish. As the victorious party found it difficult to carry off their prisoners, I heard a proposal made to shoot us all ; but this was instantly negatived by a French officer who was present.

We were taken to a small fortress in the neighbourhood, however, where we arrived at night, and met with much better treatment than the first proposal concerning us led us to anticipate. I was suffering from great pain and excessive fatigue, and shall never forget the great relief and comfort that I felt when I was enabled to strip off my bloody clothes and stretch my weary limbs upon a bed. A surgeon was soon brought to attend me ; but the wounds I had received were dangerous, and very soon I was reduced to such a state as to know nothing of what passed around me.

When at length I awoke to infant weakness, from out of

all the dumb forgetfulness of death, the first thing that struck my ear was the tone of a voice that I thought I knew ; and, turning my heavy head upon the pillow, I saw Donna Isidora de Arquas speaking earnestly with a man in the garb of a surgeon. She left my chamber instantly, however, and did not return again. A new, strong feeling of hope came over me : it seemed as if a fresh light had broken upon my spirit ; and, doubtless, those emotions, so bland, so sweet, and so soothing, greatly tended to accelerate the progress of my recovery. I asked no questions ; indeed, I gave no intimation to any one that I had seen or recognised Donna Isidora, for I feared to scare her away, as I had done before ; and, feeling confident that she and Maria were not far off, I laid a thousand schemes for the purpose of preventing the possibility of their escaping me again. At length I was permitted to rise and approach the window of the room ; and sitting there, while the balmy air of spring came and breathed upon me with its soft and healing influence, I gazed down into the court-yard of the castle, where a neatly gravelled walk, and some trees just bursting into leaf, afforded a pleasant esplanade for the inhabitants of the fortress.

When I first took my seat, there was no one there ; but ere I had remained at the window ten minutes, two figures appeared below, the sight of whose companionship went far to undo all that the surgeon had done for me. They were Maria de Arquas and the Count of Huesca ! They were conversing earnestly ; but it was Maria who appeared to speak the most eagerly. He seemed more to act the part of listener ; and while her beautiful form and graceful limbs were thrown into a thousand picturesque attitudes, as the movements of the body followed the emotions of the mind, and accompanied the eloquence of the lips, he regarded her, perhaps with admiration, perhaps with interest deeper still ;

but appeared more to ponder what he heard, than to reply to it.

Three times, as they conversed, I saw Maria raise her handkerchief to her eyes, in order, evidently, to clear them from tears; and it was lucky for all parties that I was a prisoner in my chamber, or the conference might have ended more painfully than it did. Twice I tried the door, but it was locked; and I returned with angry vehemence to my station near the window. When I looked out again, Huesca was standing gazing as if on vacancy, with his hand firmly pressed upon his brow, while Maria stood before him, her bright eyes cast down, her hands drooping by her side, and an air of deep despondency pervading her whole graceful figure.

The moment afterwards, with a sudden start, the count took her hand and raised it to his lips.—I could have driven a dagger into his heart! Then, however, he instantly let it fall again, said a few words, which, of course, I could not hear, bowed low and respectfully, and quitted the court.

Maria remained for a moment with her eyes buried in her handkerchief, as if drying the tears which flowed abundantly from them. She then took her way in another direction, and the court was left vacant.

I continued gazing forth, however, for there were dark spirits enough stirring in my own bosom to people the whole earth with wild and fantastic shapes. The rich, the powerful, the gallant, the renowned Count of Huesca—for by this time he had gained high renown in arms—was the lover of her I loved! Was not that sufficient to rouse a whole legion of demons to torment me? The man I hated was likely to snatch from my arms the woman I so fondly loved! Was not that enough to create a hell of terrible images, to greet my sight wherever I turned my eyes?

For three days I raved like a madman; and it was more than a fortnight before I was again well enough to walk up and down my chamber. The surgeon attended me with skill and care; and from him I learned the last tidings of the faction to which I had attached myself. It, too, had fallen; the Bourbon line was firmly established on the throne of Spain, and the hopes of winning in the service of the House of Austria honour and fame, and that independent station which would have enabled me to compete with any one for the hand of her I loved, were now at an end; and I sat in dark and gloomy reveries, giving myself up to despair.

Though I took little note of anything that passed around, I one morning perceived a change. There was a stillness in the place which I had not before noticed; and I found that it was the want of the usual measured footsteps of the sentry, treading backwards and forwards the corridor into which my chamber opened. While I was meditating on what this could mean, the governor of the place appeared, and informed me that I was no longer a prisoner.

"A general amnesty," he said, "has just been published, from which your name is not excluded, and therefore I have received orders from the viceroy of Arragon to set you immediately at liberty."

I received the news with much more indifference than he expected, for my mind was full of other thoughts, much more painful than even my imprisonment.

"Who is the viceroy?" I demanded, casually.

"The present viceroy," replied the governor, "is the celebrated Count of Huesca. But I fear he is not destined to remain long with us."

"Curse him!" I muttered between my teeth, "curse him!" But the governor heard not what I said; and, as soon as I could recover my temper sufficiently to speak calmly on

the subject, I asked tidings of Donna Isidora and her niece. "They live at some leagues' distance," he said, "on the road to Madrid. They came here for security during the last efforts of the Austrians; but they have now returned to their own house for some time. Do you know them?" he continued. "They are cousins of my wife; and Donna Maria, we suspect, is likely, ere long, to form one of the noblest alliances in Spain."

I knew his meaning but too well; and, setting my teeth hard, and grasping the arm of the chair in which I sat, I forced myself to be silent. The governor then proceeded to ask me to dine with him, but I refused and, as the only favour, requested him to hasten for me the purchase of a horse to carry me to Madrid. This was speedily accomplished; for my captors had left my purse, which was not badly filled, upon my person; and though the governor remonstrated strongly upon my setting out, in my weak condition, in the middle of a hot and sunny day, I adhered to my resolution, and departed, determined to present myself at the dwelling of Donna Isidora and her niece.

Ere I had journeyed a couple of miles, I was overtaken by a boy on a quick-footed mule, who told me that he had brought me a note to the fortress; but, finding that I was gone, had followed me along the road. I eagerly tore it open, and found that it was signed by Donna Isidora herself, and went to tell me, that as she had an event of importance to communicate, she would come to see me the next day. With a bitter smile, I muttered that I would go to see her that night myself.

I then told the boy to guide me on my way; and, after a journey of about two hours, entered a domain which he told me belonged to his mistress. It was richly cultivated; everything I saw bespoke affluence and prosperity; and I

murmured, with many a bitter feeling at my heart, "This is Ferdinand of Huesca's doing."

I rode on, however, and came to a handsome house, fortified in such a manner as to render it safe against any small party of marauders, but bearing no trace whatever of having suffered from the late war. Everything wore the same aspect as the lands around. Comfort and sufficiency, without splendour, were to be seen throughout both; and instead of being ushered in by a female servant, as formerly, there was now no lack of men to take my horse, and to lead me to the presence of the lady.

When I saw all this, and remembered who had done it—for I doubted not that it was Huesca—I took a sudden determination. My hatred for him was none the less than it had been; but my love for Maria was more than my own selfishness; and I resolved not to trouble her prospect of happiness; to rend my own heart sooner than deprive her of the bright fortunes that awaited her. To see her—to bid her adieu for ever; and then to leave her to one so much more prosperous—shall I own it?—so much more worthy than myself. The resolution was taken in an instant, but it was firm; and, waiting for no ceremonies, I strode after the lackey, so as to be in the room at the same moment with himself. That room presented a scene which I shall never forget, and which, for a moment, took away from me my powers of utterance.

In the centre of the chamber were grouped together Donna Isidora, Maria, and the Count of Huesca. He stood in the middle deadly pale; with all the high colour that once glowed in his cheek gone from it under deep mental suffering. He was dressed in the splendid costume of the viceroy of Arragon; and his fine light brown hair fell gracefully over his shoulders, while his hat and plume lay upon the table hard by. On his right stood the simple-hearted Donna Isidora

gazing up in his face, and pressing between both of hers his right hand, in which was an open paper. On his left, kneeling at his feet, with her whole countenance filled with an expression of deep devoted gratitude, was Maria de Arquas, pressing his hand to her lips, and dewing it with a shower of bright tears. He looked upon neither the one nor the other of his companions; but at the moment I entered his eyes were raised towards heaven, and his lips moved as if he prayed.

The instant after, all eyes were turned upon me, as I advanced towards them, and was about to speak. Maria, however, started up and caught my hand. "Juan!" she cried, with energetic vehemence—"Juan, not a word! not a word, till you have heard all! I know your nature—speak not a word, till you have heard all."

"Maria," I replied, with gloomy calmness, "you mistake me. No word that I have to utter need remain unspoken. I have nothing of upbraiding, I have nothing of remonstrance to utter. Sickness and sorrow have tamed me down; experience has amended my conduct, if not altered my character. Our nature we cannot change; but we can change its action."

"Hear me!—hear me, Juan!" exclaimed Huesca.

"I will, my lord count," I replied; "I will, when you have heard me. I come not to trouble your happiness. I come not to snatch from you one, when I feel that you must love. I come not selfishly to deprive her of fortune, station, high rank, and a glorious name, and make her wed one comparatively a beggar in all these possessions. I come but to see, once more before I die, the only woman I have ever loved, the only woman I shall ever love, until the grave closes over me; and having seen her, and wished her happiness, to bid her adieu for ever."

Huesca made an impatient movement with his hand; but he paused for a moment, to be sure that I had done. "Don

Juan," he said, at length, "you are right, in so far that I love this lady—that I have loved her for many years—ever since first we met; but in all the rest you speak under a dark mistake. I long saw that she was indifferent to me; and, not knowing that her heart was given to another, I hoped by services rendered to her, and to this kind-hearted lady, to change indifference into love. I have found means of doing them service; I have recovered for them these fair lands, which were unjustly withheld from them. I have spilt my blood in their defence; I have protected them in the hour of danger; and at length, some three weeks ago, when I had saved them from capture and imprisonment—from the desolation of their lands and the pillage of their dwelling, I committed one slight error, and mistook the voice of gratitude for the voice of affection. I dared to speak of my love; to tell its commencement, its progress, and its long silence. I spoke the hopes I had conceived, and the happy dreams that filled my heart; and I offered all that I had to offer, wishing that all were ten times more. Juan de Sylva, I found that I had bitterly deceived myself. With noble frankness, which made me resign all hope with the bitterest regret, this beautiful, this excellent being, told me that she loved, and had long loved, another. She wept for the grief she caused me; she wept for the sorrow that she saw must be my fate through life; but while she told me that she could never give her heart to me, she told me also that her own fate was as sad as mine; that she, too, loved without hope; for that the father of him she loved had exacted a promise from herself and her aunt, to avoid him on every occasion:—a promise which they had kept with painful exactness. I asked to be a friend. I asked to be a friend, if I might not be a lover; and presumed to demand the name of him who was happy in my disappointment. I found, Juan, that it was the com-

panion of my youth, the fellow-student whose regard I had too often striven to gain in vain. I knew my influence with his father ; I knew that the situation of Maria de Arquas was much changed, and that, perhaps, his father's objections might be removed. I set off immediately to seek him ; and while I obtained for myself the government of Mexico, which will remove me for many years from the scene of my sorrows, I obtained from your father this written consent to your union with her you love. I ask you but one favour, I solicit but one kindness at your hands : delay your marriage but a few short weeks, till I have sailed from these shores—for I love her still too well, too deeply, too passionately, to behold her the bride of another, without my heart breaking at the sight."

There was a struggle within me—the fiercest, the strongest struggle with which ever my mortal nature has had to contend. I felt that he was generous ; I felt that he was noble ; I knew that I should be grateful ; I knew that I ought to love him ; and yet the deep-rooted, the early-born, the everlasting enmity of my heart, rose up, strong as my life itself, against the calm conviction of my reason. But reason—but good feeling—but noble principles, had greater power now than formerly : I resolved to bow my passions to my will ; to acknowledge that which I felt to be true ; to conquer myself and the strong passion that was above myself. Nevertheless, the strife within me was painted on my visage. Like the storm-cloud struggling in the sky with a strong wind, the various shades of powerful emotion combating my intense determination, crossed, as it would seem, my countenance, and caught the eye of her I loved. Starting forward again, she clasped my two hands in hers, and looking earnestly in my face, exclaimed—" Oh ! speak nobly, Juan, speak nobly ! Speak as the better spirit within thee prompts ! Speak the words that are written on

the brighter page of thy heart's tablet! Let me—let me be proud of him I love!”

I pressed her to my bosom—but slightly, and then withdrew my arms; for at that moment I would not have inflicted an additional pang upon him for the whole world. I did conquer myself; and, holding out my hand towards him, I said—“Don Ferdinand, you have conquered! You force me to be grateful! I do believe that in every man's nature there is an original bent which cannot be overcome. We may tie the boughs of the oak; we may twist the branches even of the stiff cork-tree; we may prune the yew or the cypress into a thousand fantastic shapes; but still they retain, each of them, so strongly its original character, that no eye which lights upon them will have any difficulty in distinguishing which is the oak, the cork-tree, the yew, or the cypress. Thus, too, I believe it is with the human heart. We may mould it by custom into strange forms, but the original inclinations will remain and characterise it still, till the trunk wither and the tree decay. So it is with me; so has it ever been! Conscious as I am that I have deep cause to love you; conscious am I that gratitude holds me as a bankrupt debtor! My lord, I have no means to pay you; and I will endeavour, as far as possible, so to school my heart; that thanks and praises—heartless thanks and unwilling praises, I mean—shall not be all I offer. But, be you sure that, if I cannot so far triumph over mine own nature as to love you for the benefits you have conferred, I have now been sufficiently tutored in the school of adversity to hate myself for the evil feelings which are an inseparable part of my identity. I would fain use, Don Ferdinand, the most painful image to shew my sense of the baseness of spirit which ingratitude under present circumstances would imply—the viper cannot change its nature. To sting the hand that——”

"Nay, nay!" exclaimed Maria, clasping her arms round me,—*"Speak it not! speak it not, my Juan! Thou art no viper! Thou beliest thyself! I will not have thee call up such an image to depict thy feelings!"*

"No, no!" cried the count, grasping my hand; "it is not so, Juan de Sylva! The time will come when, youthful passion passed away, and we, sunk into the tranquil calm of more mature years, shall rest, like barks at anchor on a summer sea, waiting the quick wind to waft us on the long voyage to the eternal shore, and looking back on the land we leave without one feeling but that of peace and good-will to all our companions of heretofore. But I will stay no longer. Juan, I embraced you when first we met;" and he cast his arms around me. "Donna Isidora, God's benison, and many thanks for much kindness, be with you! Lady," he added, turning to Maria, "I trust I leave you happy with the man of your choice—the man of your early love. I have known him long, I have known him well: he has one fault—I scruple not to call it a great one—but I trust I take that one along with me beyond the seas; and I sincerely pray to God, that, though I may never cease to remember you—and in that memory may remain miserable—may you and Juan forget me, and in that forgetfulness be perfectly happy!"

He turned and left us: and though when I think of him I could bury my face in the dust, and weep bitter tears of shame and of regret, the unchangeable nature of my affections remain the same, and my hatred and my love are still unaltered!

THE END.

